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International Students' Perceived Support and Barriers Adapting to the New Cultural
Experience in a Southern California University

A Dissertation by
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

August 2021

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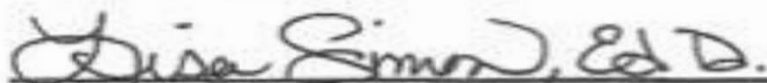
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Experience in a Southern California Universities

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ABSTRACT

International Students' Perceived Support and Barriers Adapting to the New Cultural Experience in a Southern California University

by Jeanette Ayala

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenology study was to explore the lived experiences of international students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

Methodology: Qualitative research was the methodology used for this study because it was the approach best suited to gain a better understanding of the phenomena of international students' lived experiences. The study involved a qualitative design with a phenomenological inquiry approach. The technique of using semi-structured interviews is a method that allows a researcher to have an in-depth interaction with the participants of the study.

Findings: Research Question 1 yielded eight major findings, and Research Question 2 yielded four. Overall, the findings revealed that international students deal with communication, transportation, academic, social isolation, and cultural adjustment challenges. To overcome these challenges, students have adopted resources that are mainly derived from the local students, university advisors, and professors.

Conclusions: First, participants described the international student orientation sessions as the initial source of support to them when they enrolled in the university. Second, international student advisors and instructors were equally credited with helping the participants adapt to the new cultural experiences. Third, participants reported having

local students as friends as their most important source of support when adapting to the new cultural experience in a southern California university. The barriers faced by international students can be placed into three categories: access to resources, challenges with the host family, and difficulty understanding communication in English.

Recommendations: The results of this study indicate universities should develop formalized strategic support plans for international students. Secondly, universities should provide diversity and inclusion training for students, faculty, and staff to provide greater awareness about the experiences of international students. Having a better understanding of international students' support systems and challenges can lead to faculty and staff members recognizing students' needs. International students can be effectively offered supportive campus resources, services, and social activities. Universities in southern California and in the US at large can be prepared to meet students' needs, not only academically and socially but also culturally.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming increasingly globalized. As a result, nations, academic institutions, parents, and students must prepare for a world with diverse people, cultures, and philosophies. Understanding today's global community is more than an ideal; it is a necessity (Seton Hall University, 2016). Globalization is not only shaping the world's economy and culture, but it is also influencing higher education (Albach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010, p. 3) University World News (2014) reported that “Nearly five million international students are likely to be studying for degrees outside their own countries in what has become one of humanity's great mass movements” (p. 1). This global mobility is predicted to increase to 7.2 million in 2025 (Gu, Schweinfurt, & Day, 2009).

Corresponding to this global mobility, nations have increasingly been issuing visas and scholarships for their students to study abroad. Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Chile are several of the countries in which scholarships or grants have been afforded to students who wish to study abroad. The Brazilian government launched initiatives from 2011 to 2016 to provide more than 100,000 scholarships for international study in science and technology (IIE, 2021). In addition, King Abdullah Scholarship Program has provided over 207,000 Saudi Arabian students the opportunity to study abroad at a cost of \$6 billion (Reuters, 2021). Furthermore, Chile plans to offer 30,000 such scholarships by 2018 and is offering 35 scholarships per year (Sood, 2012, para. 4).

Countries are encouraging the outflow of students to study abroad in hopes of obtaining talented professionals who are knowledgeable in the latest technological and medical advances (Yehia, 2018). For the fourth year in a row, the US hosted more than 1 million international students in 2018–2019, with a large population of students coming

from China, India, and South Korea. Government agencies and businesses in the hosting countries will employ graduating international students who remain because they are valued as new entrants to the labor market (Yehia, 2018). In 2018 alone, around 662,100 students left China to pursue overseas studies, making China the largest country of origin for international students in the world (Qi et al., 2020, para. 1). The U.S Department of State (2021) provides online resources for international students to help them choose a U.S. college or university through a program called EducationUSA. In turn, postsecondary institutions that are receiving international students are becoming more dependent on the resources these students provide to their academic institutions. Postsecondary schools refer to academic institutions that are public colleges, private non-profit colleges, or private for-profit colleges. The academic institutions are categorized into vocational schools, two-year colleges, and four-year universities.

Institutions of higher education are capitalizing on the mass influx of students who are studying abroad; they have hired agents who get paid on commission to recruit international students (Chen & Korn, 2015). The financial resources international students provide to higher education institutions are the main reason for the increase in enrollments. By enrolling in U.S. universities, foreign students contribute not only to the universities' coffers, but their enrollment also contributes to educating local students at lower fees (Ball, 2017).

Postsecondary educational institutions in the Anglosphere countries are hosting a substantial number of international students. Foreign students have preferred the US, a foremost Anglosphere country, for decades, and California is a popular destination within the US (Jachowicz, 2007). The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers'

(NAFSA) latest analysis uncovered that international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$38.7 billion and supported 415,996 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2019-2020 academic year. In addition, the Institute of International Education (IIE) publishes the Open Doors Report annually in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The US attracted the largest share of international students globally, testifying to the unparalleled quality and capacity of U.S. colleges and universities (Open Doors Report, 2018).

The Open Doors Report (2014) stated that southern California attracted the largest number of foreign students nationwide, with a student enrollment of approximately 111,400, followed by New York and Texas, which had nearly 88,000 and 63,000 international students respectively in 2013. The majority of both undergraduate and graduate international students are choosing to study abroad in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

California is increasingly committed to international education statewide. The Southern California International Education Policy Resolution was passed as law on September 11, 2002, which affirmed southern California's support for international education. The law encourages institutions of higher education to support programs related to learning about different cultures and global issues and to promote the exchange of southern Californians and international students.

Although southern California benefits from having international students in terms of developing diversity, cultural awareness, and global perspectives, the international students should receive reciprocal benefits. The strong increase in international student

enrollment shows that international students and parents continue to believe that a U.S. degree is a sound investment for their future careers (IIE Open Door Report, 2013).

However, pursuing this degree for international students can be fraught with challenges. Some private and public postsecondary academic institutions in the US are under scrutiny by the government, the media, and educators. Investigations by state and federal authorities as well as lawsuits filed over the last two years have highlighted numerous troubling instances of fraud, abuse, and unsatisfactory student outcomes at certain for-profit colleges (Harnish, 2012). Smith (2010) identified a Public Broadcasting Service Frontline special that highlighted some common industry criticisms of private postsecondary institutions: (a) misleading recruitment tactics, (b) poor educational programming, (c) student loan debts, and (d) academic programs that do not lead to successful career opportunities. The scrutiny of these alleged tactics highlights the belief that some postsecondary academic institutions' interests are profit driven and not academically driven. This raises concerns regarding whether this profit-minded mentality instead of a student-centered mentality will affect the experiences of international students when they arrive at their respective institutions and whether they will receive adequate support while enrolled.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus outbreak in March 2020 (COVID-19) a global pandemic (National Library of Medicine, 2020). Countries worldwide began to close their borders as a preventive measure to the spreading of the virus during the pandemic. "Thousands have been forced to fly home early since the outbreak originating in China gathered momentum in January and began to spread around the globe"

(Anderson, Syrluga, & Lumpkin, 2020, para. 10). American students who were studying abroad returned home when the US started to close its borders.

International students studying in the US also returned to their home countries due to the closing of postsecondary institutions nationwide. Anderson et al. (2020) elaborated,

The Corona virus crisis led to widespread shutdowns of U.S. campuses in March as authorities sought to control the spread of the pathogen. Among the first to feel the effects: those studying in China, South Korea, Italy, and other hard-hit countries. (para. 10)

Background

This literature review provides an overview of the leading research on the process of international students' participating in study abroad opportunities. This section will explore the global perspective of the mass movement of foreign students who are leaving their home countries to study abroad, and it will also include an analysis of the educational benefits derived by both the home countries of the international students studying abroad and the hosting countries. The researcher will explore international students' lived experiences regarding (a) adapting to a new culture, (b) the acculturation process in terms of challenges they face, (c) the support they require, and (d) any barriers experienced. Additionally, this section will delve into the network supports or challenges international students have experienced while attending a southern California university.

Global economic and social trends have created dramatic transformation for higher education systems around the world. According to the U.S. Department of Education of International Strategy (2018), to maximize the nation's economic

development, it is essential for America to partake in promoting global education.

Although some debate surrounds the direction and extent of the links between education and economic growth, there is no doubt that inadequate education is a powerful indicator of poverty and income inequality (Chaparro, 2009). Education impacts human rights and quality of life; therefore, it is both a national and global development issue.

Bhandari, Gutierrez, Bohm, and Clarke III (2009) argued through empirical evidence that many countries have been contributing to global education by sending their students abroad. These international students are obtaining both specialized skills in various fields and cultural experiences that they can bring back to their home countries to help facilitate intercultural communication and business negotiations. In turn, international students have the opportunity to experience personal, social, and cultural growth as they transition from their native culture to a new culture. The emphasis on international education around the world has caused dramatic changes to higher education in recent years because the mobility of students is perpetually increasing. Nations have been providing scholarships for students who wish to study abroad. The leading countries from where students are leaving to study abroad include China, South Korea, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Russia (IIE Open Door Report, 2014; NAFSA, 2013). China remains the country that sends the most students abroad to study.

The home countries benefit from having students who study abroad because they return with a better understanding of their professional and academic disciplines. These countries expect their students to return to work as professionals in various fields such as technology, engineering, medicine, and agronomy (Song, 2014). The students will have gained intercultural communication skills, heightened awareness of a second culture, and

a broadened perspective of the world. Parents of international students view the opportunity to study in the US as the beginning of a better life for their children. Countries that host foreign students also experience various benefits, including increased enrollment in their programs, which can lead to increased revenue. Fitzer (2007) conducted a study which found that community colleges enrolling significant numbers of foreign students received substantial financial, cultural, and academic benefits. International students also increase the social and cultural diversity of college campuses, enriching the research and learning environment and helping home students develop internationally relevant skills (Hughes, 2019, p. 1). Not only do the educational institutions benefit, but international students also benefit the local economies by purchasing food, traveling, and housing. International students contributed \$45 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018 according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The United States and International Education

Research conducted by IIE (2013) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) indicates that the US is the first choice for international students to study abroad. One of the large appeals of the US as a study abroad option is the dominance of the English language. Badur (2003) asserted,

International students have chosen American institutions of higher education over the years because English has become the medium of commercial, diplomatic, and scientific communication worldwide. American universities also provide accessibility to resources that are indispensable for research. These characteristics of American universities attract scholars and students from

throughout the world who would like to expand their knowledge and take advantage of the resources provided. (p. 31)

The IIE Open Door Report (2014) reported that in the 2013 to 2014 academic year, a record breaking number of international students enrolled in the US. The State Department's Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database recorded that the US admitted 886,052 non-immigrant international students to study at the postsecondary level on temporary visas (IIE Open Door Report, 2014). The increase of foreign students coming to study in the US has occurred over the last 10 years even despite the restrictions placed on student visas after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

New international students were unable to obtain a visa due to the US's imposing a stay-at-home order during the pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Currently enrolled international students were confronted with the decision to return home when many public and private postsecondary institutions in the US closed their educational facilities. The coronavirus pandemic forced a near-total shutdown of school buildings in the spring of 2020 (Education Week, 2020). Chancellor Tim White said classes across the California State University (CSU) system, which enrolls about 480,000 undergraduate students, have been conducted virtually since March 2020 in an effort to slow the spread of the Coronavirus, which causes the COVID-19 disease (Burke, 2020, para. 8).

The closure of educational institutions during the pandemic led to challenges for students. Globally, the style of teaching changed from in person to online instruction. However, international students who returned home were confronted with few classes being offered online. Educational instruction had to

be quickly created for online platforms in both grade school and in higher education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created other challenges that have impacted numerous international students globally. In 2020, students were stuck in foreign countries, no student visas were being issued, campuses began testing for the virus, and campuses experienced lower enrollment in postsecondary institutions due to the high number of COVID-19 cases. In addition, China's being blamed for the pandemic led to an increase in anti-Chinese sentiment worldwide. Against the current situation of increasing anti-Chinese sentiment in the West, whether Asian destinations will replace those in the West as preferable education choices for Chinese students wishing to study abroad is currently an open question (Qi et al., 2020, para. I).

U.S. interest in foreign students. The US understands that international education is vital to state economies and essential to student learning. Johnson (2011) conveyed that the US has decided to make international education a priority for the future. The U.S. economy benefits from the increasing numbers of international students enrolled to study in the U.S. education system. According to the NAFSA (2014) 2013-14 economic analysis report, 340,000 jobs were created or supported by international students, and these jobs contributed \$26.8 billion to the U.S. economy.

Importance of foreign students to the state of California. International students are important to institutions of higher education because they support institutions' commitments to international education, which (a) adds to the diversity of campuses and (b) offers a global dimension to the student body that might not otherwise exist (Dellow & Romano, 2006). For example, these students add different perspectives in the

classroom and enhance the mutual understanding and appreciation of the differences found around the world (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Hammer et al. discovered that “as one’s experience of cultural difference become more complex and sophisticated, one’s potential competence in intercultural relationship increases” (p. 423).

Foreign students’ diverse perspectives create an important educational exchange in colleges and universities. International students contribute to the cultural diversity not only of the schools they attend but also of the communities in which they live.

International students offer a unique perspective in the classroom because they are able to bring a global dimension to the discussion (Education Counts, 2016). Thus, American and international students alike are able to develop a cultural awareness and sensitivity as they learn to understand each other’s points of view and perspectives (Badur, 2003).

International students’ impact on California’s economy. Loudenback (2016) reported that recent data from Self Score, a company providing financial services to international students, reveals that foreign students pay up to three times more than in-state students at public universities, effectively subsidizing tuition cost for domestic students and functioning as bailout for universities (para. 1). In the 2019 academic year, international students contributed \$38.7 billion to the U.S. economy. The economy grew substantially in 2019 according to NAFSA; the net contribution from international students in tuition, fees, and living expenses to the state of California was \$2,547,272,000 in 2014. In addition, foreign students and their families created or supported 47,702 jobs through their contributions to California’s economy. International students are consumers of food, clothes, and other goods. In addition, both the students and their families require services for housing, transportation, medical care, and travel.

Recruitment of international students. Globally, postsecondary institutions are struggling financially and are seeking various revenue streams from which to generate more income. Recruiting international students has emerged as one way to accomplish this goal. Due to the appeal of increased revenue through international student enrollment, many academic institutions fill the budget gap by enrolling as many international students as possible (Redding, 2013).

Many postsecondary vocational schools, colleges, and universities are using paid agents to recruit international students to apply to U.S. schools. Some academic educators view the practice of using commission-paid agents to recruit students as questionable. However, those in favor of paid agents believe they are vital for U.S. institutions to maintain a competitive edge over other schools around the world (Thadani, 2013).

One problem with using paid agents to recruit overseas students is that they have biases towards American schools and can provide misleading information to students regarding the academic institution (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2012). In addition, ethical issues arise when recruiters are seeking to fulfill a quota of students instead of trying to find the best-suited academic institution for the students. The fact that recruiters are paid on commission generates the opportunity for unethical practices to arise.

Thus, some private and public academic institutions' recruitment practices are being investigated for deceptive marketing and for incorrectly stating the number of job placements. It is unlawful for public academic institutions that receive Title IV federal loans to utilize commission-based agents to recruit students (Harnish, 2012). Various state attorney generals have filed lawsuits against academic institutions accused of

deceptive and unfair business practices (Harnish, 2012). Senator Tom Harkin, chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension, led a series of high-profile hearings that highlighted the wide array of for-profit colleges' abuses, including misleading claims over their programs' "credentials being accepted by employers, providing false job placement numbers to prospective students, and deceptive and fraudulent sales tactics, including misinformation on private student loans" (Harnish, 2010, p. 3).

Adaptation and Acculturation of International Students

According to Chavajay (2013), several studies focused on cultural adaptation indicate that international students report feelings of guilt and loneliness when leaving relatives and friends behind in their native countries. In addition, foreign students find it challenging to interact with students and staff due to cultural differences. Berry (2005) defined acculturation as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p. 698). Participating in the academic and social realms of U.S. college life requires international students to learn the customs of the US. According to Kelly and Moogan (2012), international students must adapt to their new higher education system to be able to succeed. For international students studying on a U.S. campus, socio-cultural adaptation involves learning local cultural values and the skills needed to manage everyday activities, such as making friends and getting around in the community.

Postsecondary schools have a division or department dedicated to assisting foreign students. These services include assistance with visas and a new student orientation to help international students become familiar with schools' courses and

programs. However, the support that international students appear to obtain from people of the host country has been reported to be infrequent and superficial, consisting mainly of information such as housing accommodation and directions (Chavajay, 2013).

Support network for foreign students in the US. U.S. postsecondary institutions assist international students with obtaining their visas to come to the US. International student advisors communicate directly with the student about the acceptance and enrollment processes before coming to the US. In addition, foreign students have a dedicated new student orientation to guide them on how to enroll in classes and utilize the library and other facilities on campus. Usually, international students are also assisted with referral services for housing and travel information. The Host Family Program helps international students become acquainted with American social life by connecting them with American families who are interested in communicating and exchanging ideas with international students.

Heyn (2013) found that international students' main sources of support in the US are their professors, religion, family, and other students from their home country. Professors can assist international students by providing tutoring in English or course work, devoting time to go over assignments and tests, and responding to questions regarding daily living activities. Students' belief systems also represent a source of support for them. Some students use prayer as a means of dealing with the difficulties they encounter in adapting to a new culture. Furthermore, international students' families support them by calling, providing financial assistance, and visiting them in the US.

International students assist their fellow country members because they feel loyalty to their home country and have experienced similar issues with adjusting to U.S.

culture. The students' common language and ethnicity provide them with a comfort level to ask for assistance. International students from cultures more similar to U.S. culture find their adjustment somewhat easier compared to the adjustment for international students from more removed cultures (Zhang & Zhou, 2010).

International students' success. According to Heyn (2013), international students expressed that a primary motivation to succeed academically was the fear of disappointing family members. This sense of obligation to family motivated students to try to succeed throughout their educational endeavors. Heyn's research revealed that international students' inner self-drive, structure, organization, resiliency, and discipline were equally essential to their success.

In addition to the above mentioned factors, a number of studies have shown that prior academic achievement plays a dominant role in predicting students' learning outcomes (McKenzie & Schweitze, 2001; McKenzie, Gow, & Schweitzer, 2004). In addition, the study showed that proficiency in English plays a crucial role in successfully completing courses in an English-speaking learning environment (Heyn, 2013).

Li, Chen, and Duanmu (2010) reached a similar conclusion,

The perceived significance of learning success to family, proficiency in English and social communication with compatriots were the most significant predictors of academic performance of all international students in this study. It should be noted that the first predictor had an adverse association with academic achievement, while the other two showed positive effects. (p. 13)

International students' challenges. International students in U.S. postsecondary schools face manifold challenges. To overcome these challenges, international students

must develop new ways of adapting, thinking, and communicating. The students are expected to handle the same rigorous academic demands as their domestic counterparts but in an unfamiliar linguistic, academic, and cultural environment. International students within the U.S. face five common challenges: language, culture, social interactions, education, and finances. Each of these five challenges is given a one paragraph treatment below.

Foreign students who are using a newly-developed second language can find it difficult to communicate with the natives of a particular area. Learning becomes difficult as students find it challenging to understand academic English essential to succeed in a university setting.

Culture is defined as the beliefs and traditions of a given society (Le & LaCost, 2017). However, cultures are not universal; therefore, some common practices in one region are discouraged in another region. This can bring about emotional and physical discomfort to individuals deciding to study and live in a place different from their home. These cultural differences affect or interfere with students' studies (Goodwin et al., 2018).

Although international students' primary objectives involve accomplishing their academic goals, socialization is essential for emotional and psychological stability (Badur, 2003). A strong social support network can help decrease acculturation stress and improve students' social, physical, and psychological well-being. Socializing for many international students can be a hurdle because of cultural differences. Socio-cultural adaptation is facilitated when international students are exposed to U.S. values

and social norms through interactions with people from the host country (Lee & Pistole, 2014).

In American college courses, students are graded through tests, papers, and class participation. Kuo (2011) stated that international graduate students face academic challenges with regards to American instructional methods, social-cultural differences, and personal adjustment due to their lack of conversational English skills (p. 3). Class participation, especially at the graduate level, is expected in American classrooms (Kuo, 2011). Many college professors in the US want learning to be a collaborative experience, and they encourage participation from students both in class and during their office hours. This learning can be difficult for students whose academic environments previously consisted of mainly hands-off instructors. International students have expressed apprehension toward interacting in class because of their language skills and concomitant feelings of inadequacy and insecurity (De Araujo, 2011; Gallagher, 2013; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006).

Finally, studying at the university level in the US is not a cheap venture once tuition, room and board, and additional living costs are considered. Many universities across the country offer special programs for international students, but these programs often provide only a small bit of relief. Unlike American students, international students cannot benefit from U.S. federal or state-funded financial aid and must find other means of paying for school.

Career aspirations. Career aspirations are one of the main driving forces and perceived benefits of studying abroad (King, Findlay, Ahrens, & Geddes, 2013). A U.S. education is seen as a strong basis for attaining a lucrative job. Many international

students aspire to stay in the US to work, but this remains challenging due to immigration laws. The U.S. Department of State (2014) authorizes two types of employment training to help international students link their academic study to the business world.

International students are permitted to work part-time positions at their respective campuses adding up to no more than 20 hours per week through a program called curriculum practical (Department of Homeland Security, 2014). Upon graduation from either an undergraduate or graduate institution, foreign students can work a full-time position in the US for a year under a program called optional practical training (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014). International students can apply to the U.S. Department of State for a work visa if they are experiencing a financial hardship.

To help mitigate these five major sources of challenges, international students have identified three types of resources at their schools that have helped them with their career decisions: academic resources, computer technology, and counseling services (Jachowicz, 2007). However, not all postsecondary schools have these services available to international students.

Statement of the Research Problem

Many U.S. postsecondary institutions are being suspected of employing questionable practices. Media outlets, federal investigations, and increased scrutiny by state legislatures have recently highlighted unease about the operations and functions of some postsecondary schools (Mason, 2011). Specifically, their recruitment practices and financial motivations regarding their incorporation of international education have been questioned. As of 2017, an estimated 20,000 recruitment agencies are in operation worldwide (NACAC, 2018). Opponents to hiring agents to recruit international students

cite issues of unfair business practices. Agents have been known not to have the best interests of the students in mind when making recommendations, and consequently, some have recommended educational institutions that were not appropriate for students (Durani, 2019, para. 16). Despite the educational institution's paying the fees to recruit students, agents have been known to also charge students for their services or to charge for free scholarships that colleges award (Durani, 2019, para. 16). In addition, the financial resources international students provide are the main reason for the increase in international student enrollment in the US. Loudenback (2016) reported that recent data from Self Score, a company providing financial services to international students, reveals that foreign students pay up to three times more than in-state students at public universities, "effectively subsidizing tuition costs for domestic students and functioning as a bailout for universities" (para. 1).

The number of U.S. higher educational institutions using international recruiting agents is increasingly growing; 38.5% of institutions reported using agents in 2017, compared to 37% in 2015 and 30% in 2010 (Redden, 2018, para. 3). Agents have become a core part of the pathway to an international education for many students, and they have also become vital to many higher education institutions in meeting challenging recruitment targets (Huang, Nikula, Raimo, & West, 2020). The International Enrollment Snapshot Report indicated that since the pandemic, most U.S. higher education institutions reported funding outreach and recruitment of international students at the same levels or at higher levels than previously reported in the Fall 2020, indicating that commitment to recruiting international students has strengthened (IIE, 2020, p. 9).

The U.S. Department of Education report stated, “For-profit schools on average devote less than a third of the money spent by public universities toward instruction and less than a fifth of the money spent by private nonprofit institutions” (Smith, 2014, p. 1). In addition, the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) report for 2013 stated, “the postsecondary funding problem will not go away, especially since state funds for higher education have been declining on a per capita basis and as a percentage of state appropriations” (p. 4). Postsecondary schools faced with budget cuts have reduced classes and services available to their student populations. NASBO acknowledged in their 2013 report that postsecondary institutions’ spending on instruction has declined slightly, whereas administrative and general support costs have increased (NASBO, 2013). Parents and students are burdened with tuition increases and fees to make up for schools’ budget deficits. And although students are paying more for their undergraduate and graduate degrees now than in previous decades, schools are spending less on instruction, counseling, and career services. NASBO (2013) further elaborated on the problem,

There are a number of different elements to the state higher education financing situation. None alone captures all of the dynamics at work, which are not just about financing higher education institutions, or even about keeping tuitions low, but also about ways to use resources to meet public needs for higher education.

(p. 12)

Private postsecondary institutions’ business models include heavy advertising, in which government loans generally represent the main source of revenue, which subsequently dictates the cost of tuition for students. Colleges have also begun to accept

more international students to balance their budgets (Lewin, 2012). But the revenue that institutions receive from international students and the institutions' reliance on this revenue raise questions of ethics because students can be viewed solely in terms of financial gain. In addition to impacting the way that international students can be viewed, this need for financial revenue has also impacted U.S. citizens. Lewin (2012) asserted, "With state financing slashed by more than half in the last three years, university officials in Washington State University decided to pull back on admissions offers to Washington residents, and increase them to students overseas" (p. 2).

Postsecondary institutions are capitalizing on the wave of international students wanting to study in the US as a means of reducing budget deficits. But their decisions to reduce services and close classes can be considered less student-centered and more business-centered. Budget cuts impact the cost of tuition, the quality of instructors, the courses offered each semester, the types of books used, the number of staff employed, and the services available to students.

Some of southern California's postsecondary institutions are exhibiting similar business practices as other national and global institutions, such as the heavy marketing business model, questionable recruiting practices of international students, and less money being devoted to student services. Harnish and Bridges (2012) expounded,

While many for-profit colleges make constructive contributions to the health and well-being of students and communities, several high-profile investigations and lawsuits have revealed troubling instances of fraud and abuse that could taint the entire industry and devalue for-profit college credentials. (p. 13)

For several years, California has been the state with the highest number of international students enrolled in postsecondary institutions (IIE Open Door, 2013). In the academic year of 2013 to 2014, California had 121,647 international students attending postsecondary schools (NAFSA, 2014). Both private and public postsecondary institutions in southern California can capitalize on the mass global movement of students studying abroad to remedy budgetary constraints.

The current educational environments of higher education institutions are heavily influenced by budgetary cuts, and thus many of them have reduced funding for various aspects of the educational experience. Because California postsecondary schools have the highest number of international students enrolled in their institutions, it is imperative to explore the institutions' abilities to provide the effective services they claim to offer for these students. This study was focused on the perspectives of the international students to ascertain if these services have indeed been offered and to determine the effectiveness of the services provided.

Although studies have been conducted to explore the perceptions of international students (Anayah 2012; Chaparro, 2009; Cho, 2009), there is limited research investigating these students' lived experiences. More specifically, there is very little research examining the types of support international students have received to help them successfully adapt to a new cultural experience and overcome barriers while enrolled in a southern California university.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenology study was to explore the lived experiences of international students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt

to a new culture experience and barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new cultural experience?
2. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of barriers encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience?

Significance of the Problem

The difficulties in applying to study abroad, the challenges associated with obtaining a visa, and the rise in anti-Asian discrimination, especially towards Chinese students, could lead to a decrease in international student enrollment. According to NAFSA (2020), international students contributed nearly \$39 billion to the U.S. economy and created or supported 416,000 jobs. Exploring international students' perceptions regarding (a) their lived experiences, (b) network support and barriers with acculturation, and (c) their education experience provided a unique insight into the effectiveness of postsecondary schools' support for this growing population.

By considering these students' needs and expectations and the effectiveness of the services provided, postsecondary institutions can better understand and aid their international student populations. School administrators can use the students' perceptions to improve current policies and procedures, to restructure programs, and to create new services for international students. Academic institutions can gain valuable

insight into whether the instructors and support systems provided have assisted or deterred international students from meeting their educational expectations. Also, administrators can use the findings to improve foreign student retention by focusing on the international students' needs.

In addition, the study involved exploring whether international students perceive that postsecondary institutions have established support systems for them to cope with living far away from their families and friends. Patron (2014) highlighted the need for raising awareness of the feelings of loss and loneliness among international students. An understanding of what factors contribute to foreign students' successfully adapting to collegiate life is necessary for California postsecondary institutions to help international students attain their academic and personal goals.

Definitions

Theoretical Definitions

Acculturation. Cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture (Reynolds, 2016).

Anglosphere. The Anglosphere countries of the world in which the English language and cultural values predominate (Merriam Webster, 2021).

Culture. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Hofstede, 1997).

Education. Education brings about an inherent and permanent change in a person's thinking and capacity to do things (ACS Distance Education, 2021). Education is concerned with methods of teaching and learning in schools or school-like environments as opposed to various nonformal and informal means of socialization (Merriam Webster, 2021). Education is the socially organized and regulated process of continuous transference of socially significant experience from previous to following generations (Naziev, 2017, para.1).

F-1 Visa. The F-1 visa is for academic students. Students with the F-1 visa are allowed to enter the United States as full-time students at an accredited college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, or other academic institution or in a language training program (Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2016).

J-1 Visa. The exchange visitor (J) non-immigrant visa category is for individuals approved to participate in work-and study-based exchange visitor programs (United States Department of State, 2015).

Lived Experience. Lived experience refers to the personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people. It may also refer to knowledge of people gained from direct face-to-face interaction rather than through a technological medium. In phenomenology, it refers to our situated, immediate activities and encounters in everyday experience (Oxford University Press, 2021).

M-1 Visa. The M-1 visa category includes students in vocational or other nonacademic programs other than language training (DHS, 2015).

Postsecondary Institution. A postsecondary institution is defined as a vocational school, college, or university. The school can be either a public, private, or non-profit institution. The vocational school, college, or university must be certified by the Department of State to issue visas and utilize the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to track international students. Postsecondary institutions have to offer certificates, associate degrees, or bachelor's degrees to international students.

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). The SEVP manages schools, nonimmigrant students in the F and M visa classifications, and their dependents on behalf of the DHS (Department of Home Land Security, 2015). As part of the National Security Investigations Division, it connects government organizations that are interested in information on non-immigrants who are studying in the United States.

Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Both SEVP and the Department of Justice (DOJ) use SEVIS to track and monitor schools; exchange visitor programs; and F, M, and J non-immigrants while they visit the United States and participate in the U.S. education system (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, n.d.).

Operational Definitions

Academic Success. An international student's academic success is defined as a student completing his or her goals of receiving a degree or obtaining a job in their field of study.

International Students. An international student is defined as a citizen of a foreign country who applied to the SEVP and was issued a F-1 or M-1 visa to study in the

United States. The terms international student and foreign student are used interchangeably and refer to those who temporarily come to the US to study, particularly with specific types of non-immigrant visas.

Network Support. Network support is defined as the systems, academic orientations, counseling, peer mentors, study services, international student writing classes, or other outside of classroom assistance that postsecondary schools provide to students in support of their education, their assimilation to American culture, and their career choices.

Delimitations

This phenomenological study involved exploring international students' lived experiences while attending a university in southern California. The students' lived experiences are unique to them and might not be applicable to other students. According to Patton (2012), "The emphasis of purposive sampling is not to generalizing the sample to a wider population but rather to study information that is rich and illuminating or comprehending what is being examined" (p. 1).

In addition, the study's population consisted of international students who were seeking to obtain an undergraduate degree or a diploma. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the students and asked the same questions to ensure consistency in the study. However, the researcher had the liberty to adjust the interview questions based on the students' answers or to obtain more in-depth information on their perceptions. Finally, the researcher chose southern California as the geographic location of the postsecondary schools in this study. The postsecondary schools utilized for the study were universities located in southern California that were certified by the

Department of Homeland Security to issue F-1 or M-1 visas to students to study in the United States.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is segmented into five chapters that each cover different elements of the research topic. Chapter I comprises the introduction of the overall subject and problem of the research study. Chapter II consists of the statement of the research problem, the significance of the study, and a review of the literature. A conceptual framework from published researchers is also included in Chapter II. Chapter III allows the study to be replicated because a detailed description is provided of the research methodology, procedures, and study design. The research data, method of data collection, and the key findings of the study are the major categories of Chapter IV. Chapter V provides facts to support the conclusions about the research findings. In addition, in Chapter V, recommendations are given to further expand the research study. Finally, the research study also includes references for the citations utilized in the five chapters and appendices.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

U.S. postsecondary institutions have been suspected of employing questionable practices for enrolling international students in schools. Media outlets, federal investigations, and increased scrutiny by state legislatures have highlighted unease about the operations and functions of some postsecondary schools (Brown & Jones, 2011). Specifically, postsecondary institutions' recruitment practices and financial motivations regarding their incorporation of international education have been questioned. Private postsecondary institutions' business models include heavy advertising, in which government loans generally represent the main source of revenue, which subsequently dictates the cost of tuition for students. Colleges have also begun to accept more international students to balance their budgets (Hemsley-Brown, 2012). But the revenue that institutions receive from international students and the institutions' reliance on this revenue raise questions of ethics because students can be viewed solely in terms of financial gain.

Postsecondary institutions are capitalizing on the wave of international students wanting to study in the US as a means of reducing budget deficits. But their decisions to reduce services and close classes can be considered less student-centered and more business-centered. Budget cuts impact the cost of tuition, the quality of instructors, the courses offered each semester, the types of books used, the number of staff employed, and the services available to students. The current educational environments of higher education institutions are heavily influenced by budgetary cuts, and thus many of them have reduced funding for various aspects of the educational experience.

Because California postsecondary schools have the highest number of international students enrolled in their institutions, it is imperative to explore the institutions' abilities to provide the effective services they claim to offer for these students. This study was focused on the perspectives of the international students to ascertain if these services have indeed been offered and to determine the effectiveness of the services provided. Although studies have been conducted to explore the perceptions of international students (Chaparro, 2009; Cho, 2009), there is limited research investigating students' lived experiences. Specifically, no research to date has explored international students' lived experiences in postsecondary schools in southern California to discover how their institutions have supported their academic goals, their need for acculturation, and their career aspirations.

Search Strategy

The following databases were used to search for scholarly, peer-reviewed articles associated with the topic of interest: Academic Search, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Research Gate, Scopus, and SpringerLink. Search terms included cultural adaptation of international students, global perspective on international education, importance of foreign students, international students, international student benefits, international student challenges, international student success, net contributions from international students, recruitment of international students, study abroad interest, and support network for international students. Relevant studies were generated from database searches using these keywords, both individually and in combination. Those that were deemed relevant to the study were included in the literature review. Over 80% (85.1%) of sources were published between 2016 to 2021, and 14.9% of sources were published before 2016.

Organization of the Chapter

In the first section, the problem that motivates this research is discussed, the specific research gap that this study helps fill is identified, and the search process that yielded the sources in this literature review is explained. Then, the theoretical framework for the study will be discussed. Next, a discussion on the historical content related to international students will be presented. Then current relevant studies will be organized in categories, progressing from the broad subject matter towards the gap to be addressed in this study.

Figure 1. Chart of Major Sections

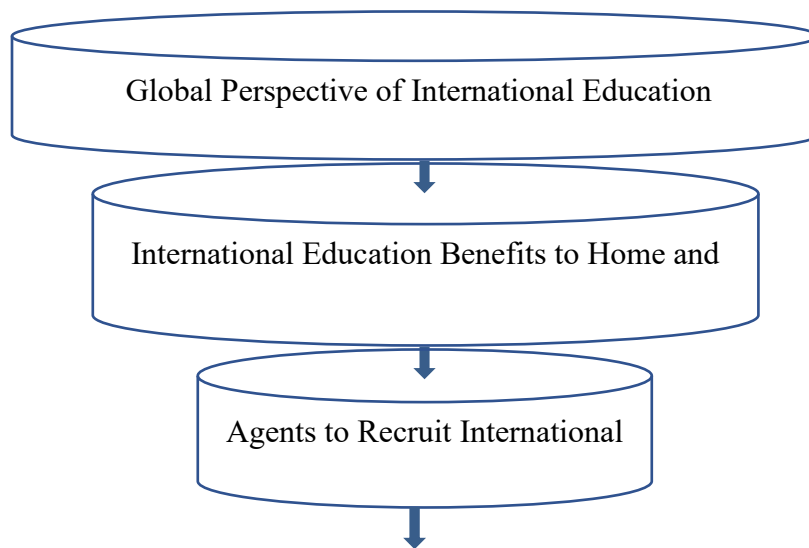
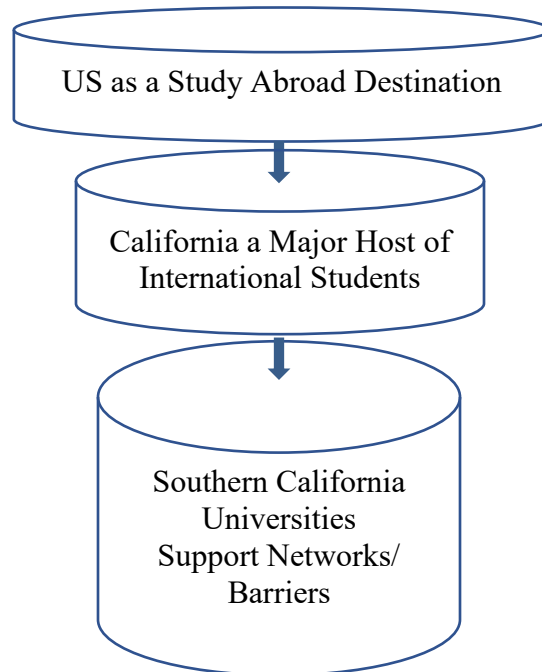


Figure 1

Chart of Major Sections



The major sections of this literature review are (a) global perspective of international education, (b) international education benefits to home and host countries, (c) interest in the US as a study abroad destination, (d) agents recruiting international students, (e) California is a major host of international students, (f) acculturation support networks, and (g) the barriers that foreign students experience with adapting to a new cultural experience in southern California universities. Finally, a conclusion will be given to discuss how the research gap was established based on the existing literature. But prior to these sections, the theoretical frameworks that anchored this study will be addressed.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher utilized social capital theory and the social reproduction of class privileges theory as the theoretical foundations for the current study.

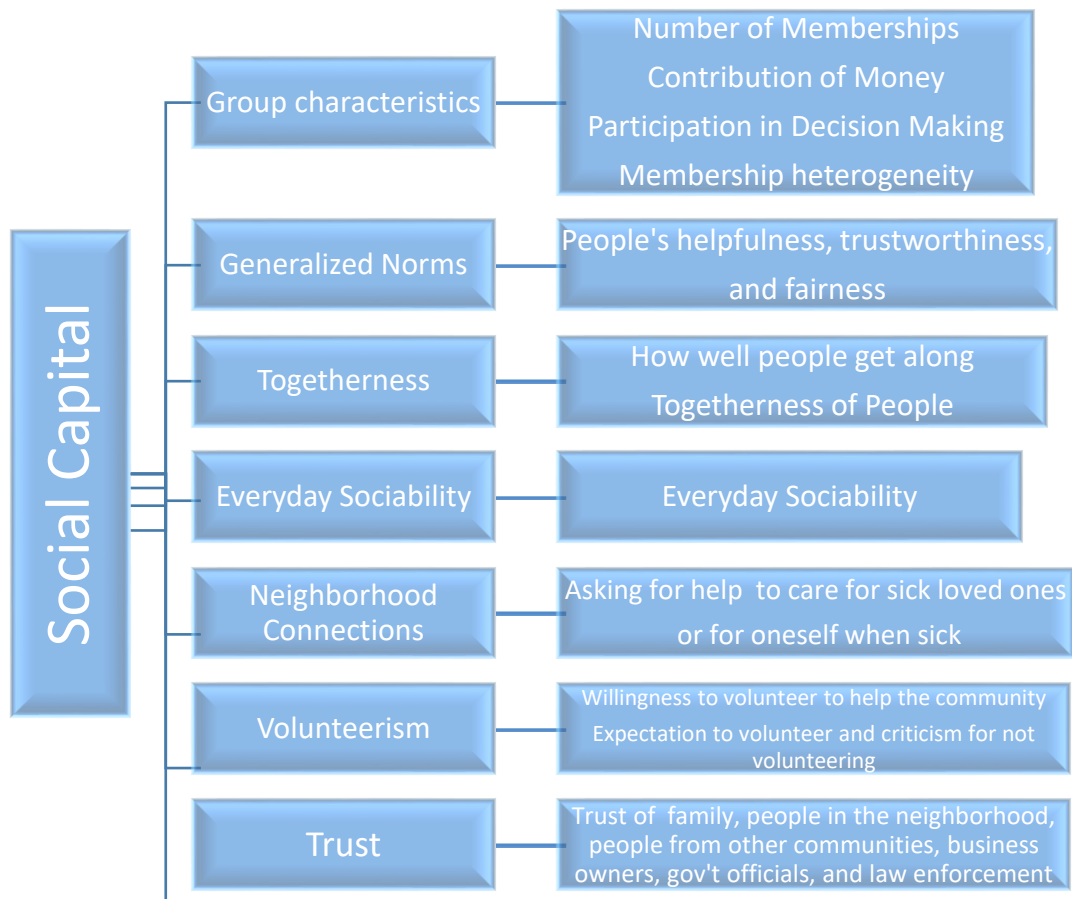
Social Capital Theory

Researchers generally agree that social capital refers to the tangible and intangible resources provided by relatives, friends, and paisanos (countrymen and countrywomen) to facilitate migration, settlement, and employment in a foreign country (Massey, 1988; Massey & Espinosa, 1997; Flores-Yeffal, 2013). The contemporary meaning of social capital was first introduced by Loury (1977) and was theoretically developed by Bourdieu (1986). According to social capital theory, the social relationships that develop between people are resources, and from this development human capital is accumulated (Cross & Cummings, 2004). Experts have examined social capital at the individual level and as it applies to relationships within a society (Cross & Cummings, 2004; Lin, 2000). Bourdieu (1986) claimed that the existence between individuals accumulates through social interaction and rests on the premise that social connections establish a relationship that can help individuals adapt to a new cultural environment.

Social capital is “a set of shared values that allows individuals to work together in a group to effectively achieve a common purpose” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 186). Social capital is the benefit brought about by interactions between people in a social society (Loury, 1977). An example of social capital is the beliefs and standards found in the norms of trust that become the values of a community. The schematic of social capital theory in Figure 2 shows each interrelated form associated with social relations.

Together, these forms can create a complex web of social interactions, which in turn forms social capital.

Figure 2. Schematic for the Theory of Social Capital

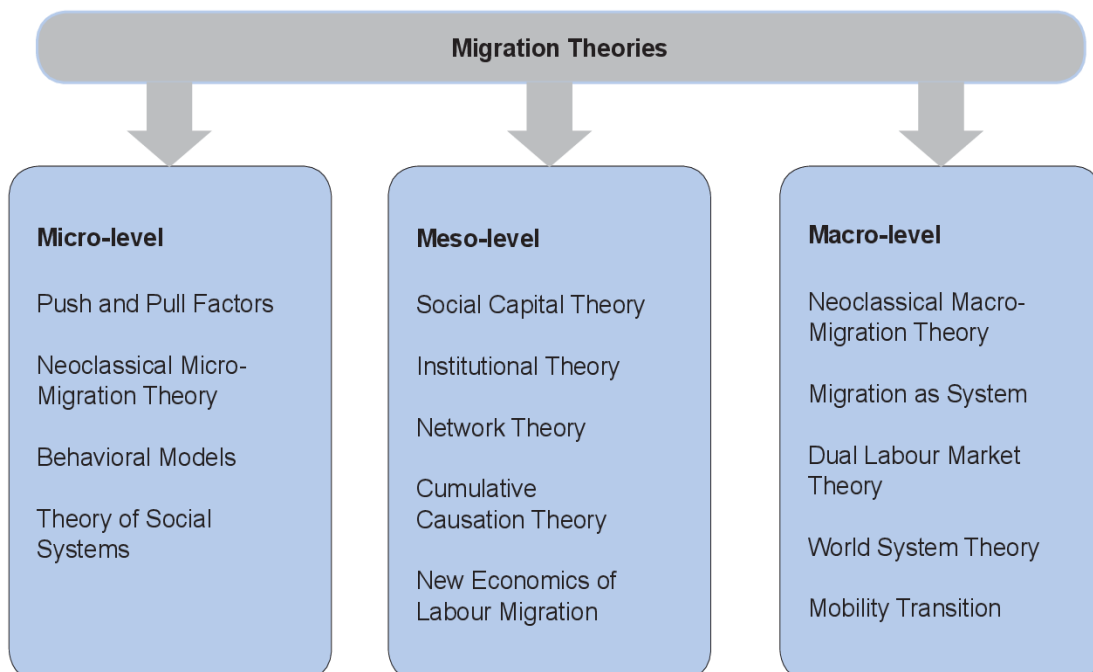


Source: Narayan & Cassidy (2001)

Social capital theory suggests that international students who are adapting to a new cultural experience will benefit greatly from the social capital of fellow students, especially students who are familiar with the local culture. The students' common goals of graduating from the university and pursuing a post-educational career are the social bonds that help create trust. The social interactions between students become a resource through which international students can gain insight and understanding into the local culture, thus facilitating their transition.

Migration theory is associated with social capital theory and is commonly conceptualized as resources of information or assistance that individuals obtain through their social ties to prior migrants (Massey, 1987). These findings imply that migrant social capital resources can work in different ways for different groups of individuals or in different settings.

Figure 3. Migration Theory Connections to Social Levels



Social Reproduction of Class Privileges Theory

The social reproduction of class privileges theory addresses some of the reasons why international students, particularly those from Eastern cultures, face challenges when enrolled in universities with Western cultures. Bourdieu (1977), who founded the theory, asserted that social order in most societies appears to duplicate itself and reinforce distinctions based on class; this tends to reinforce the dominant culture in society. Bourdieu argued that even though institutions of education often claim to facilitate equality, they are places where distinctions based on class and culture are not only reinforced but also made worse. Bourdieu contended that in education institutions, academic rewards are bestowed upon students who show they understand the culture of the school, but teachers disadvantage students who do not show such understanding of the school's culture.

According to Bourdieu (1977), children enter schools with varying levels of social skills and awareness learned at home. Bourdieu called this cumulative set of social skills and awareness "habitus". Bourdieu also argued that children enter school with differing levels of linguistic competence. In addition, in any society, there is a dominant habitus. The dominant habitus displays certain cultural norms that are held by the dominant class. Bourdieu suggested that in education, habitus either allows students to succeed or restricts them from succeeding. As an example, students with a background in the dominant culture might fit well within the school's academic environment, because the school's academic environment is often an extension of the dominant culture the student grew up with at home. Conversely, students who did not grow up in the dominant culture

might experience difficulty transitioning into schools whose dominant culture is different than the one they were exposed to at home.

In discussing Bourdieu's theory, Sullivan (2002) contended that a school's curricula and ways of evaluating learning are reflections of the dominant cultural values within that school's society. As a result, students who did not grow up in the dominant culture might struggle to adapt. Sullivan further suggested that the likely incongruence between students' cultural habitus and the dominant culture of the school might result in the marginalization of students who did not grow up in the dominant culture and who struggle to quickly adapt to it. Moreover, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that schools perpetuate the dominant culture. As a result, it is much more likely for students who did not grow up in the dominant culture to fail in school than for students who did grow up in the dominant culture. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) further declared that students who do not quickly flourish in the dominant culture of the school are more likely to experience lack of resources than are students who do flourish in the dominant culture. Therefore, this theory suggests that international students who are coming from cultures significantly different from the United States will experience difficulty adapting to U.S. university life.

Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed includes an explanation of the integration of geography in a curriculum focused on internationalization. Increased enrollment equates to increased revenue, and most of the current literature comments on how institutions and the local communities benefit as international students add to the economy by purchasing food, traveling, and seeking housing (Loynes & Gurholt, 2017). The history of international

student recruitment in literature is not abundant, with much of the focus on expansion of universities and financial attributions to the economic stability of the host country.

Current literature within the past five years explores how international students add to institutions' cultural and academic environments by (a) adding an element of diversity to their respective campuses and (b) providing insight into various cultures, which leads to a widened perspective of the students in the host country. Other topics found within the literature associated with the current study's topic of interest include the global perspective of international education and its importance and benefits to both home and host countries, students' interest in the US as a study abroad destination, and the adaptation and acculturation of international students. In addition, many scholars have investigated support networks for foreign students in the US, role attachment, travel experiences, and language barriers and challenges. Finally, the literature explored includes studies on the treatment of foreign students in the host countries, the academic success of international students, and the very limited research on international students in higher education institutions located in California.

Historical Content

At the end of the 1900s, universities began to expand their recruitment endeavors to include global marketing and advertising efforts for the enticement of overseas students (Cubillo, Sánchez, & Cerviño, 2006). Studies have shown that students who study abroad have the chance to experience different cultures in a country with different beliefs, languages, and societies (Chen, 2017; Massey & Singer, 1998; Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). During the mid-20th century, the U.S. higher education system saw a growth of exchange programs throughout American campuses (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997).

Several of these programs continue today based on the earliest advocates of scholarly exchange, including the Fulbright program, the National Defense Education Act, and Title VI of the Higher Educational Act. These programs enabled flexibility for overseas exchange students to the US. After 1960, however, a significant number of U.S. students left their home country to study abroad (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997). Hoffa and Pearson (1997) claimed that for more than 30 years, research institutions within the Carnegie categories have sent numerous students on study abroad programs. Concurrently, between 1985 and 1995, American study abroad programs had increased by 75%, moving from 48,000 participants to 84,400 participants (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997). In all, about 1% of all American students prior to graduation take part in a study abroad program (Hoffa & Pearson, 1997).

Higher education facilities began producing recruitment and advertising campaigns to attract the most eligible applicants to their campuses (Onk & Joseph, 2017). Many of these universities developed unique methods for recruiting international students using a criterion that international students considered important for their academic learning. From this, higher education institutions began to engage international students to leave their homes and become part of the American higher educational system (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bergman, 2005). The pursuit of increasing student enrollment at higher education facilities constitutes a large part of their business success. Globally, recruiting international students generates big business. Nearly four million students are studying abroad, contributing over \$70 billion to the global economy. There are varied reasons for preferring to study overseas, including a wish to increase employability in a specific labor market, the failure to find relevant study opportunities in students' home

countries, and the willingness to travel abroad. Colleges and universities historically have recruited international students for the higher dollar amounts they pay for tuition (Ozturgut, 2013). However, as education moved towards diversity, leaders in higher education found that having an international student population prompts a diversity of thought and teaches students global issues and a greater understanding of other cultures (Ozturgut, 2013).

Currently, universities compete to host international students, and they have implemented national strategies to host such students and create top global talent to meet the demands of a global economy (Cubillo et al., 2006; Hemsley-Brown, 2012). Due to this competitiveness, many universities have established a mission of global engagement that has prompted recruitment of international students who are willing to persevere in the face of challenges brought about by the current political rise in anti-immigration rhetoric (Horta, 2009).

The mobility of international students in universities and colleges globally has prompted even further interest beyond increases in enrollments and financial gains. Research has shown a mobility in international students attending higher education institutions due to increased interest in the global, political, and economic arenas (Garcia & Villarreal, 2014). U.S. postsecondary institutions are working towards expanding their international student populations to increase both revenue and diversity. This has created a type of global war among higher education institutions that have pursued identification, recruitment, and matriculation of talented overseas students who would potentially choose to study abroad.

Garcia and Villarreal (2014) sought to understand several facets of choosing a school abroad for overseas students. The questions asked by the authors included: Is the prestige of a university a determining factor in choosing to study abroad for non-Americans living outside the US? Are there any financial influences (federal or state) that directly affect a higher education institution's ability to enroll foreign students? What are the implications for postsecondary institutions in the US? What are the implications for scientific, cultural, and economic advancement? (Garcia & Villarreal, 2014). The findings from this investigation showed that international students were increasing in numbers worldwide, with the US becoming a foremost place selected for higher education (Garcia & Villarreal, 2014). However, it was noted that global competition for international students was growing. With the current U.S. immigration policies and rising costs related to higher education, the US has been losing international student enrollment to other nations. Garcia and Villarreal (2014) suggested that the U.S. government should determine the means to support higher educational facilities in pursuing international student recruitment to ensure postsecondary institutions graduate citizens who are function effectively within a global society while being accepting of diversity (pg. 134).

Global Perspective of International Education

Education impacts human rights and the quality of life; therefore, it is both a national and global development issue. Global economic and social trends have created dramatic transformation for higher education systems around the world. Regionally or internationally, students have often moved across borders to improve their educational endeavors. To maximize the nation's economic development, it is essential for America

to partake in promoting global education, because the global economy is in great need of highly-skilled, globally-exposed professionals. Consequently, the best and brightest international students should be targeted as critical human capital for the global labor force (Kearney & Lincoln, 2017).

Importance of the global education perspective. Higher education systems around the world have been experiencing dramatic transformation brought about by global economic and social trends. It is essential from a national perspective on economic development for academic institutions to promote global education. Although some debate surrounds the direction and extent of the links between education and economic growth, there is no doubt that inadequate education is a powerful indicator of poverty and income inequality (Bista, 2016; 2018).

A way in which countries have been contributing to global education is through sending their students abroad. These international students are obtaining specialized skills in various fields as well as cultural experiences that they can bring back to their home countries to help facilitate intercultural communication and business negotiations. In turn, international students have the opportunity for personal, social, and cultural growth as they transition from their native culture to a new culture. Due to the promotion of international education across the world, recent years have shown dramatic changes to higher education as the mobility of students is perpetually increasing. Nations have been providing scholarships for students who wish to study abroad.

In recent decades, the mobility of international students has been perceived as one of the indicators of campus diversity, internationalization, and a prime source to boost the revenues of higher education institutions in major destinations (Bista, 2019; Bista,

Sharma, & Gaulee, 2018; Bryla, 2018; Jones, 2017; Marshall, 2018). The leading countries from where students are leaving to study abroad include China, South Korea, India, Brazil, Saudia Arabia, and Russia (Witherell & Clayton, 2014). China remains the country that sends the most students abroad to study.

Global education pursuers should emphasize the problems and issues outside borders. This type of education prompts a good understanding of systems, ecology, culture, economics, politics, and technology (Altun, 2017). Global education involves examining the issues and problems of the people in the world from their perspectives. It facilitates awareness of current global events while thinking differently, which helps promote accurate commentary regarding such events.

International education benefits to home and host countries. Many countries benefit from having international students attend their colleges and universities because those educated might choose to stay in the country, contributing to the country's economic standing. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields are increasingly filled with foreign-born immigrants, particularly those who were U.S.-educated international students with highly specialized training (Cole, 2017; Ruiz & Krogstad, 2017). Studies have shown that international students studying in the US have brought in multiple innovative ideas in medicine, technology, science, mathematics, and engineering, which has provided advancements in many STEM disciplines (Cole, 2017; Ruiz & Krogstad, 2017). International students studying abroad will have gained intercultural communication skills, heightened awareness of a second culture, and a broadened perspective (Ugwu & Trache, 2017). They have been promoting innovation and discovery. However, these countries expect their students to return to work as

professionals in various fields such as technology, engineering, medicine, and agronomy (Ugwu & Trache, 2017).

International education has been examined from the perspective of self-development, with experts observing that studying abroad can assist with furthering professional development for international students when searching for employment (Bian, 2017; Cardwell, 2020; Duerden et al., 2018). Bian (2017) found that international students in China and France chose the universities where they studied due to wanting to explore the cultural heritage of each country. Selection of the host country among the 16 participants was based on attraction to the culture, not the school's academics. The participants also recognized that there would be a personal investment into the economy of the host country, and both France and China offered comparatively stronger, more well-developed programs with financial benefits that enabled the participants to afford studying abroad. The participants were also enticed by the future professional development potential offered in each country. The job markets in both France and China were wide-open for more diversified diploma holders and provided more attractive compensation for new hires (Bian, 2017).

Cardwell (2020) also found that student selection of where to study was based on factors similar to what Bian (2017) claimed. In addition, student participants in both studies claimed to be more likely to adapt in the host country based on the host family's assistance. Those who lived in university housing were slower to acclimate to the French and Chinese cultures than those who lived with a host. Not only was adaptation to the culture slower, but dealing with the complex administrative processes such as course

registration, medical physicals, and even opening a bank account was also more difficult for those who did not have a host family.

In transitioning to the new environment, most international students suffered a deep sense of loss (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Marginson et al., 2010). There was a phase of disorientation and uncertainty for most of the international students. First of all, their new identity symbolized separation from their past. The label of foreigner made them lose their individuality in the eyes of local people, sometimes even for themselves. Starting a life in which international students were challenged in terms of language, culture, and social norms was often painful. Next, unexpected situations made them less sure about their future, and they started to have doubts about the feasibility and duration of their study plans. Finally, the power of the presence of a proximate site and the imaginative significance of an older site forced the creation of divided identities (Appadurai, 1996; Marginson et al., 2010). Due to a sense of separation from the past and anxiety about the future, most international students focused too much on the present.

A host country's social, political, and cultural setting created some variations in international student experiences (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Nevertheless, no matter (a) the host country, (b) where the students are from, or (c) their motivation to study abroad, they still experience the same phases of mobility. The differences exist only in the duration of each stage and each student's way of going through it, which is also greatly influenced by their former personal trajectories. Experts claim that more frequent exchanges between different countries support students in developing a more open thought and strengthening their adaptation competencies (Appadurai, 1996; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010).

However, despite these challenges, researchers found that studying abroad helped students with academic achievement, because the international curriculum incorporates positive and progressive learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessments. International curricula produce changed perspectives about the world and about students' relationship to it (de Wit & Leask, 2015). De Wit and Leask (2015) examined how responsible international students become and observed that this responsibility impacts a university when students embrace their global society when studying abroad.

The United States and International Education

Research conducted by IIE (2013) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) indicates that the US is the first choice for international students in studying abroad. One of the large appeals of the US as a study abroad option is the fact that English is the dominant language. Badur (2003) asserted,

International students have chosen American institutions of higher education over the years because English has become the medium of commercial, diplomatic, and scientific communication worldwide. American universities also provide accessibility to resources that are indispensable for research. These characteristics of American universities attract scholars and students from throughout the world who would like to expand their knowledge and take advantage of the resources provided. (p. 31)

The IIE Open Door Report (2014) noted that in the academic year 2013 to 2014, a record-breaking number of international students enrolled in the US. The State Department's SEVIS database recorded that the US admitted 886,052 non-immigrant international students to study at the postsecondary level on temporary visas (Witherell &

Clayton, 2014). Arrowsmith and Mandla (2017) examined how the federal government's changes to its policies on immigration have reflected its understanding of the significance of cultural diversity in U.S. colleges and universities. Educational institutions have also responded by initiating various strategies and by developing curricula to achieve equitable education and social outcomes and to promote the acceptance of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Policy development has enabled education to become the U.S.'s third-largest export market. Such state and federal government policies have supported internationalization within higher education sectors. Arrowsmith and Mandla (2017) found that building intercultural understanding into a course curriculum created a global perspective of cooperation. The authors provided a comprehensive overview of institutional strategies and policies that have been implemented successfully at the university level and at the geospatial science undergraduate discipline level (Arrowsmith & Mandla, 2017).

Interest in the US as a Study Abroad Destination

Foreign students' diverse perspectives make for an important educational exchange in colleges and universities. International students contribute to the cultural diversity not only of the schools they attend but also of the communities where they live. International students offer a unique perspective in the classroom because they are able to bring a global dimension to the discussion. Thus, American and international students alike are able to develop a cultural awareness and sensitivity as they learn to understand each other's points of view and perspectives (Badur, 2003).

Recruitment of International Students

These benefits international students bring to American colleges have caused such institutions to heavily recruit international students. However, some private and public academic institutions' recruitment practices are being investigated for deceptive marketing and incorrectly stating the number of job placements (Harnish, Bridges, & Sillman, 2012). It is unlawful for public academic institutions that receive Title IV federal loans to utilize commission-based agents to recruit students (Harnish et al., 2012). Various state attorney generals have filed lawsuits against academic institutions accused of deceptive and unfair business practices (Harnish et al., 2012). Senator Tom Harkin, chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension, led a series of high-profile hearings which highlighted the wide array of for-profit colleges' abuses, including misleading claims over their programs' "credentials being accepted by employers, providing false job placement numbers to prospective students, and deceptive and fraudulent sales tactics, including misinformation on private student loans" (Harnish et al., 2012, p. 228).

Onk and Joseph (2017) found that to govern effective recruitment for emerging universities, the outreach techniques of universities in the most economically successful countries in the world have been focused on the creation of advertising that has targeted university specialty programs designed to entice international students. To entice students from overseas to enroll in U.S. universities, the authors recognized the need for (a) funding for development of an international recruitment team and (b) creating a multicultural atmosphere (Onk & Joseph, 2017). The authors found that these emerging markets created a successful international student recruitment process and helped make

internationalization a significant feature of universities. Consequently, universities experienced (a) generation of fees from global students, (b) the promotion of international branding, and (c) increased prestige (Onk & Joseph, 2017).

James-MacEachern (2018) examined the recruitment activities implemented by higher education institutions when recruiting international students. The author observed the different means international recruiters used in their recruiting efforts and evaluated the challenges encountered. The challenges included global competition with other universities, declining enrollment, and lack of available resources for recruiting. All institutions investigated in this study faced such challenges. In addition, the higher education institutions faced commodification within the market of international students (James-MacEachern, 2018). James-MacEachern suggested that institutions might be able to improve their recruitment activity by addressing role clarity, improving coordination, differentiating their offerings, and ensuring flexibility to respond to market forces.

Acculturation

Berry and Sam (2010) defined acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 698). Participating in the academic and social realms of college life requires international students to learn the customs of the US. According to Kelly and Moogan (2012), international students must adapt to their new higher education system to be able to succeed. For international students studying on a U.S. campus, socio-cultural adaptation involves learning local cultural values and the skills needed to manage everyday activities, such as making friends and getting around in the community.

Support network for foreign students in the US. Foreign students have a dedicated new student orientation to guide them on how to enroll in classes and on how to utilize the library and other facilities on campus. Usually, international students are assisted with referral services for housing and travel information. Heyn (2013) found that international students' main sources of support in the US are their professors, religion, family, and other students from their home country. A few of the examples showing how professors assist international students are providing tutoring in English or course work, devoting time to go over assignments and tests, and responding to questions regarding daily living activities. Another source of support for these students is their belief systems. Some students use prayer as a means of dealing with the difficulties they encounter when adapting to a new culture. International students' families support them by calling, providing financial assistance, and visiting them in the US.

International students assist their fellow countrymen and countrywomen because they feel loyalty to their country and have experienced similar issues with adjusting to U.S. culture. The students' common language and ethnicity provide them with a comfort level to ask each other for assistance. International students from cultures more similar to the US will find their adjustment somewhat easier compared to international students from more removed cultures (Zhou, 2010).

Most postsecondary schools have a division or department dedicated to assisting foreign students. These services include assistance with visas and a new student orientation to help them become familiar with schools' courses and programs. However, the support that international students appear to obtain from people of the host country has been reported to be infrequent and superficial, consisting mainly of information such

as housing accommodations and directions (Safipour, Wenneberg, & Hadziabdic, 2017; Smiljanic, 2017). Acculturative stress and depression are highly connected and are considered a large issue among international students, but it is often ignored in international students.

Role of attachment, travel experiences, language barriers, and challenges.

Students who study abroad face challenges related to language barriers, social integration issues, and financial challenges (Alghhamdi & Otte, 2016; Bista, 2016). Bista (2016) examined the relevance of foreign student adaptation to an educational environment in a country not their home. The author studied the impact of particular issues such as complicated adaptation to a new lifestyle, barriers with understanding the host country's language, and social issues that were considered behavioral problems. Bista's (2016) goal was to develop recommendations and basic principles for an educational institution that provides educational services to foreign citizens. The case-study process offered the opportunity to pay close attention to the impact of social, cultural, and academic factors on their adaptation. Bista (2016) further revealed that international students often face a series of transitional difficulties immediately after studying as an international student in an overseas university. The problems were cataloged according to academic, social, and cultural aspects. Findings related that to overcome these problems, the student's use of resources provided mainly by the university was not helpful. These problems motivated international students to develop strategies to meet emerging challenges. The data obtained can assist university administration, faculty, and staff in timely detecting and eliminating of academic, social, and cultural challenges faced by international students.

To help mitigate these challenges, Geary (2016) found that fostering personal growth and a healthy society encouraged critical thinking and helped international students communicate and feel comfortable with people they might perceive differently in their host country. Quality communication grown into authentic relationships between international students and their peers can influence positive outcomes. Geary based this on research and on her own experience as an international student; the author explored some of the challenges international students face and suggested ideas for sparking interaction between international students and Americans.

Several studies on cultural adaptation have indicated that international students report feelings of guilt and loneliness when leaving relatives and friends behind in their native countries. In addition, some students find it challenging to interact with native students and staff due to cultural differences (Alghhamdi & Otte, 2016; Caldwell & Ssekasi, 2016; Shan, Hussain, & Raza Sargani, 2020). Caldwell and Ssekasi (2016) examined how Black-African students received support from host families in England but were unable to find such supporting interest on campus. The authors interviewed 50 Black-African students studying at various British universities. The students expressed the complex and frustrating process of obtaining visas and applying to a university abroad and their tensions in leaving their communities. The demands required were extensive and impacted their subsequent ability to adjust to life in their host institution. A greater understanding of the backgrounds of international students will enable higher education professionals to develop more culturally inclusive universities.

Cross-cultural communication and language challenges. The first challenge for many international students is the adaptation to life in a new country. Most

international students describe such a transition as difficult and confusing but articulate that supporting services would be very helpful if found on campus. The country's embassy is tasked with assisting international students in higher education to adapt to life in the new country. Huang et al. (2014) raised concerns about the quality of the service universities offered to international students. The authors stated that students felt naïve about their relationship to and influence on the international embassy and university. They also did not always realize that agents can often work for more than one university. Furthermore, experts suggested that international agencies make the visa process a mystery to make applicants use their services (Huang et al., 2014). The study of Huang et al. (2014) suggests that one of the difficulties of using agents is that they make false promises to university students. Students find themselves in predicaments that are difficult to fix. For example, students who trust the words of unscrupulous agents often cannot pay back the money borrowed to travel and study overseas. The home country agents often assure these students that jobs are abundant and available for students (Garcia & Villarreal, 2014). Moreover, Garcia and Villarreal (2014) found that the most significant source of anxiety for Black-African students was related to finances. This worry impacted both their goal attainment and psychological well-being while studying abroad.

International students in U.S. postsecondary schools face such multiple challenges (Alloh, Tait, & Taylor, 2018; Caldwell & Ssekasi, 2016; Shan et al., 2020). Starting college in the US is an exciting time for most, but there are some obstacles that naturally arise in a new academic environment and country. To overcome these problems, international students must develop new ways of adapting, thinking, and communicating.

The students are expected to handle the same rigorous academic demands as their domestic counterparts but in an unfamiliar linguistic, academic, and cultural environment. There are five common challenges for international students within the US: language, culture, social interactions, education, and finances.

Substantial diversity occurs naturally in most higher education institutions but is more predominant in institutions with large numbers of international students (French-Sloan, 2015). Experts suggest that anticipating verbal and non-verbal communication skills from international students can help staff provide effective administration and staff assistance with adaptation for them in a host country. Cross-culture communication is vital for these international student populations who attend overseas colleges and universities (Young & Schartner, 2017). Young and Schartner (2017) pointed out that the international student enrollment in the United States is increasing; correspondingly, the United States is trying to ensure people that it is a carefree place to visit. The statistics in the study showed that people who are trained in cross-culture communication are more sensitive and willing to help foreign students than those who are not, but this did not mean they work harder or are more reliable. Jones (2017) defined cross-cultural communication as the communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, including the similarities and differences in their modes of communication. A more comprehensive definition of this concept stated that cross-cultural communication is any communication between people who have distinct variations in age, nationalities, race, gender, ethnicity, styles of working, and sexual orientations, among other variables. Cross-cultural communication could also refer to individuals'

attempts to negotiate, exchange, and mediate cultural divergences through verbal language, body language, and gestures (Jones, 2017).

Overall, cross-cultural communication has proven to be beneficial for international students. According to Hu (2015), the key to effective cross-cultural communication was knowledge of how to deal with people from diverse backgrounds, and this was learned through research on the internet, in books, and from journals. Gaining such information helped organizational leaders understand the dissimilarities between cultural groups and make conscious efforts to overcome the challenges that arose during communication with such groups. As such, Hu also asserted that effective cross-cultural communication with international students allowed cooperation between their peers and professors, which assisted in achieving positive experiences in higher education.

For instance, people from different cultures have different expectations from the society around them, and they also have different spending habits. Consequently, they expected different remuneration packages based on their place of origin. Further, cross-cultural communication and a student's commitment to their educational institution are interlinked. Also, the internal environment in which a student lives has an impact on student commitment. For example, an internal environment comprising professors who are committed to supporting all students regardless of their cultural backgrounds caused people from diverse cultures to feel that they were part of the larger university group, which in return increased their academic performance and socio-cultural adaptation. Students from all cultures also need to work in a pleasant environment, which in return increases their commitment and promotes hard work. Because cultures differ, experts

have suggested that learning cross-cultural communication techniques is a positive adjustment for successful education. There is a necessity for those in higher education who work with international students to understand cultural norms that must be the foundation for successful interaction with these students from differing cultures.

The adaptation of cross-cultural communication skills is not a new idea. Still, it is effectively ignored in many cases of general diversity training in higher education institutions (Bista & Gaulee, 2017; Bista et al., 2018). However, the overall and initial implementation must be driven and generated based upon the different communication approaches, styles, and focuses. Globally, certain countries have constructed these means for communication via direct and indirect methods (Caldwell & Ssekasi, 2016; Horne, Lin, Anson, & Jacobson, 2018). Wang and Zhang (2020) distinguished between high-context and low-context cultures and their effects on communication. In high-context cultures, such as Africa, India, Japan, Korea, and Latin America, the rules of communication are transmitted through contextual elements, such as tonal variations, body language, and individual status, as opposed to being unequivocally stated. In these cultures, communication occurs primarily through non-verbal expressions, including facial expressions and eye movement. As a result, actual words are less important than the non-verbal elements, the people involved, and the situation. Furthermore, individuals in high-context cultures usually place emphasis on interdependence and interpersonal relationships, which implies that trust forms the core of most transactions (Wang & Zhang, 2020). Low-context cultures, on the other hand, portray individualistic tendencies and hinge on explicit verbal communication where information is usually spelled out and defined (Wang & Zhang, 2020).

Moreover, in these low-context cultures, relationships were hardly long lasting, and emphasis was placed on established procedures and goals. Examples of regions with low-context cultures included Australia, the United States, Germany, and New Zealand. This difference in cultural styles is one of the most significant challenges for cross-cultural communication. Accordingly, variations in cultural contexts impact how messages are understood by the recipients. Therefore, managers should adapt the manner in which they convey information to individuals from different cultural contexts.

Cross-cultural communication skills showed the most prominent success in various businesses within the public sector (Boado, Hu, & Soysal, 2017). Boado et al. (2017) noted that another challenge to cross-cultural communication was non-verbal differences, including eye contact and gestures. Managers in culturally diverse firms need to learn and train their employees on the significance of non-verbal communication to avoid conflicts. In the business context, cross-cultural communication was particularly important to the successful implementation of business activities and to the cooperation between teams and other stakeholders. The fact that workplaces were increasingly culturally diverse necessitated effective cross-cultural communication strategies to propel the organization towards its goals and to avoid potential conflicts and misunderstandings. Communicating across cultures was especially important for managers, whose roles include organizing, planning, controlling, and leading. The manner in which these leaders convey messages influences the efficiency with which they fulfill their managerial duties. Many of the conflicts that arose due to cultural differences were a result of the gap that developed between what a speaker intended to mean and what the listener comprehended and accepted as the content of the communication (Boado et al.,

2017). Issues such as blunt comments, open-ended questions, non-verbal behaviors, and indirectness were causes for misinterpretation by people from different cultures.

Perry (2016) posited that different mediation and negotiation skills and styles were necessary when dealing with matters between individuals from dissimilar cultural contexts. For instance, while workers in America pointed or waved their hands to give directions, such kinds of gestures were found offensive in other cultures such as Japanese culture. In addition, eye contact was perceived to be a reflection of straightforwardness and honesty in the United States and other Western countries. However, people in some Asian nations, such as Middle Eastern and Asian states, consider prolonged eye contact to be aggressive or rude in numerous situations, such as when men interacted with women, when it was considered a sign of sexual interest (Perry, 2016).

Experts found that in high-context cultures, meaning is conveyed not only by words used but also by nonverbal behaviors such as pauses and silence, understatement, implications, and a widely-shared understanding of the context of the communication (Young & Schartner, 2017). Accordingly, the paramount goal of communication is upholding harmony by avoiding conflict, uncomfortable situations, and tension. In high-context cultures that are inclined towards indirect communication, listeners have to understand the culture to comprehend what is being communicated. The fact that listeners are responsible for interpreting messages implies that their sensitivity and capacity to grasp underlying meanings and detect unspoken meanings are vital for effective communication.

Treatment of foreign students. Foreign students were often viewed through a deficit perspective, only addressing (a) student struggles with limited English language

proficiency, (b) cultural adjustment, (c) student dissatisfaction, (d) social integration issues with domestic students, and (e) a lack of preparation to meet Western educational expectations (Brown & Jones, 2011; Marginson, 2013). “Unequal treatment of international students was intensified by national attitudes that situated international students in the eyes of the ‘host’ communities as ‘deficits’ who had ‘a set of identifiable and correctable problems’” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 338). Previous research has demonstrated how international students are not treated with the same human rights as domestic students (Marginson, 2013).

International students perceived that mentoring and tutoring services were inaccessible to them (Collier & Morgan, 2008). In Collier and Morgan’s (2008) study, the mentoring program for international students was perceived as inappropriate unless one met certain specifications inclusive to speaking English. Others found that most programs failed to meet their needs. By creating programs for international students, there is a higher likelihood of recruiting overseas students to enroll in a U.S. college (Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002). Generally, most international students perceived their fluency in English was good; however, research showed that their peers admitted to having trouble understanding them due to their accents (Angelique et al., 2002; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Ruthkosky & Castano, 2007). Conversely, international students also perceived that having a mentor or tutor from their own culture and who spoke their language would help them in their studies and in their socio-cultural adaptation.

Academic success of international students. According to Heyn (2013), international students expressed that a primary motivation to succeed academically was driven by the fear of disappointing family members. This sense of obligation to family

motivates students to try to succeed throughout their educational endeavors. Heyn's research revealed that international students' inner self drive, structure and organization, resiliency, and discipline were equally essential to their success.

Countries that host foreign students derive various benefits. Horne et al. (2018) conducted a study which found that community colleges enrolling significant numbers of foreign students received substantial financial, cultural, and academic benefits. Consequently, countries that accept international students into their institutions will benefit from increased enrollment in their programs. The authors showed that students who considered international education even in a community college setting were not only more likely to succeed in their educational endeavors but were also more prepared for careers within global disciplines.

Prior academic achievement is a key academic predictor of students' further achievements at higher levels of study. A number of studies have shown that prior academic achievement plays a dominant role in predicting students' learning outcomes (Tan, 2016a, b). In addition, proficiency in English plays a crucial role in successfully completing courses in an English-speaking learning environment (Tan, 2016a). Furthermore, Li and Zizzi (2018) argued,

perceived significance of learning success to family, proficiency in English and social communication with compatriots were the most significant predictors of academic performance of all international students in this study. It should be noted that the first predictor had an adverse association with academic achievement, while the other two showed positive effects. (p. 389)

Career aspirations are one of the main driving forces for and perceived benefits of studying abroad (Tan, 2016b). A U.S. education is seen as a strong basis for attaining a lucrative job. Many international students aspire to stay in the US to work, but this remains challenging due to immigration laws. The U.S. Department of State (2014) authorizes two types of employment training to help international students link their academic study to the business world. International students are only permitted to work part-time positions at their respective campuses, adding up to no more than 20 hours per week through a program called curriculum practical (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014). Upon graduation from either an undergraduate or graduate institution, foreign students can work a full-time position in the US for a year under a program called optional practical training (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014). International students can apply to the U.S. Department of State for a work visa if due to a financial hardship.

Simm and Marvell (2015) investigated how undergraduate students demonstrate transformative education after being part of international fieldwork overseas. Students who created a set of discrete active learning situations that allowed them and their peers to engage more fully with their locales reported a positive experience and a deeper understanding of the local culture. The authors' findings showed that through (a) using the affective domain contributing to Krathwohl's taxonomy and (b) implementing cyclic experiential learning, students could establish a more critical reflection on their educational experiences.

Higher Education for International Students in California

Academic institutions are capitalizing on the wave of international students wanting to study in the US as a means of increasing their revenue. Postsecondary institutions' decisions to reduce services and close classes can be considered less student-centered and more business-centered. Budget cuts impact the cost of tuition, quality of instructors, courses offered each semester, types of books used, number of staff employed, and services available to students. California is increasingly committed to international education statewide (Tan, 2016a). Southern California's passing of the southern California International Education Policy Resolution highlights support for international education (Tan, 2016b). It encourages higher education institutions to support programs related to (a) learning about different cultures and global issues and (b) promoting southern Californians' and international students' exchange. The impact of culture changes on international students has been examined at length and viewed as both positive and problematic for the host countries (Le & LaCost, 2017). Culture refers to the beliefs and traditions of a given society (Le & LaCost, 2017). However, cultures are not universal; therefore, common practices in one region might be discouraged in another region. This can bring about emotional and physical discomfort to individuals deciding to study and live in a place different from their home.

Some of California's higher education institutions are displaying business practices such as heavy marketing business models, questionable recruiting practices of international students, and less money being devoted to student services. For several years, California has been the U.S. state with the highest number of international students enrolled in higher education institutions. In the academic year of 2013 to 2014,

California had 121,647 international students attending postsecondary schools (Banks, 2020). Both private and public postsecondary institutions in California can capitalize on the mass global movement of students studying abroad to remedy budgetary constraints. Harnish et al. (2012) claimed that although

many for-profit colleges make constructive contributions to the health and well-being of students and communities; several high-profile investigations and lawsuits have revealed troubling instances of fraud and abuse that could taint the entire industry and devalue for-profit college credentials. (p. 231)

The current educational environments of higher education institutions are heavily influenced by budgetary cuts and thus have reduced funding for various aspects of the educational experience. These cuts have led to business practices that have been called into question, particularly the practices behind the incorporation of international students into higher education institutions. This raises the following question: If the ethics behind the acquisition of an international student body are debatable, then what ethics are employed once the students actually arrive? Because California postsecondary schools have the highest number of international students enrolled in their institutions among all U.S. states, it is imperative to explore the institutions' abilities to provide the effective services they claim to offer for these international students. To this end, this study was focused on international students' perspectives of the services that have been offered to them during their studies at postsecondary education institutions in southern California.

Conclusion

The literature review has revealed that the amount of revenue institutions receives from international students and their reliance on this revenue raise questions of ethics,

because students can be viewed solely in terms of financial gain. This vision of students as dollar signs raises issues of ethics as the integrity of postsecondary institutions is called into question. In addition to the unfair vision of international students, this need for financial revenue has also impacted the citizens of the US (Chen, 2017; Li, Wang, Liu, Xu, & Cui, 2018; Park, 2016; Safipour et al., 2017; Smiljanic, 2017; Swathi, Mark, Kara, & Ankita, 2017).

Moreover, studies have not sufficiently focused on international students' lived experiences in California universities regarding what types of support they received to help them adapt to a new culture experience and what barriers they encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university (Alloh et al., 2018; Caldwell & Ssekasi, 2016; Cowley & Ssekasi, 2018; Horne et al., 2018; Le & LaCost, 2017; Shan et al., 2020). Studying at the university level in the US is never a cheap venture once tuition, room and board, and additional living costs are considered. Many universities across the country offer special programs for international students, but this often provides only a small bit of relief. Unlike American students, international students cannot benefit from U.S. federal or state-funded financial aid and therefore must find other means of paying for school (Alyahayan & Dustegor, 2020). This is the gap that is addressed in this study, as reflected in the purpose and research questions. Chapter III will provide details of the method for achieving the purpose of this study and addressing the gap established in this chapter. For a matrix summarizing the contents of this literature review, see Appendix A.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

California's postsecondary educational institutions are progressively committed to accepting international students statewide. As described by Gordon (2020), "The Institute of International Education (IIE) reported California colleges had 161,693 international students in 2018-19, a drop of 250 from the previous year, but still the most in the nation by far, with New York next" (para. 21). Qualitative research methodology was an appropriate tool for exploring international students' perceptions regarding (a) support from southern California universities to help them adapt to a new culture experience and (b) barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience. The researcher's purpose of investigating international students' lived experiences was to create a better understanding of the phenomenon and contribute to policy and social issues. More specifically, the researcher sought to contribute to the limited body of existing research exploring international students' perceptions of southern California universities' support networks and barriers experienced with acculturation.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), "Phenomenological study describes and interprets the experiences of participants regarding a particular event in order to understand the participants' meanings ascribed to that event" (p. 346). The researcher explored the phenomenon of international students' lived experiences regarding acculturation and barriers to acculturation in southern California universities. The applicability of using the phenomenological approach for this study is outlined in this chapter. First, the objective of this study is provided. Second, the rationale for selecting qualitative methodology for this study is considered. Then, the criteria for

selecting participants, the procedures for recruiting participants, and the field testing and reliability of the study are offered. Subsequently, the qualitative procedures used for data collection and analysis and the limitations of the study are discussed in detail.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore international students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers they encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new cultural experience?
2. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of barriers encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience?

Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy chosen to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way (De Vaus, 2006). This ensures the researcher will effectively address the research problem. The research design constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. Furthermore, the research problem determines the type of design the researcher should use, not the other way around (De Vaus, 2006). A qualitative research design with a phenomenological inquiry framework was an appropriate tool for

exploring international students' lived experiences. Creswell (2007) discussed how the phenomenology discipline background draws from philosophy, psychology, and education. Patton (2012) stated that the inquiry framework of phenomenology design attempts to answer the core question of what the meaning of a person's or group's lived experience is. The phenomenology inquiry design was used to develop questions for this study that focused on understanding and describing the essence of a lived experience.

The researcher explored both qualitative and quantitative research designs because these are the dominant research designs. The qualitative research design was the best-suited approach to study international students' lived experiences regarding network support and barriers experienced while attending a southern California university.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) distinguished qualitative research from quantitative research by stating that quantitative research maximizes objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure, and control in measuring and describing phenomena (p. 21).

Dissimilarly, a qualitative design requires the researcher to explore until a deep understanding is achieved by gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena that are mostly in the form of words rather than numbers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Qualitative research was the methodology used for this study because it was the approach best suited to gain a better understanding of international students' collegial life through firsthand interviews regarding their experiences. Patton (2012) described an interview as a series of open-ended questions that generate thorough answers regarding people's experiences and perspectives about a topic. The interpretations of the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences are the essence of qualitative inquiry.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described the qualitative research design ethnography as a description and interpretation of a culture of a shared group or a system where the focus is on learned patterns of actions, languages, belief, rituals, and ways of life (p. 23). The ethnography research designs differ from the phenomenology research design in that it involves prolonged field work involving observation of a shared group or activity in which group artifacts are collected and casual interviews are conducted with participants about their daily lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Ethnography was considered an improper design for this study because it does not allow for in-depth investigation into the study's phenomenon.

As outlined by Stake (2010), a qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation. A qualitative design with a phenomenological inquiry approach was adopted in the present study to investigate its research questions in an attempt to explore international students' lived experiences regarding the factors that (a) contribute to and (b) impede their acculturation process.

Population

The criteria for the participants of this study required them to be a citizen of a foreign country studying in the US on a student F-1 or J-1 visa. The population in this study consisted of international students enrolled in a university in southern California. English did not have to be the student's first language, but all participants had to be fluent in English to participate in the research study. The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2020) revealed that for the fifth consecutive year, the United States hosted more than one million international students (1,075,496) during the

2019/2020 academic year. Overall, China has the largest share of students at U.S. colleges of any country, comprising 34.6% of the total. Of the international student population in the US in 2019-2020, 18% were from India, and 4.6% hailed from South Korea.

Sample Frame

In 2020, California hosted 227,191 international students, the largest percentage of international students (18.2%) of any U.S. state (The Student and Exchange Visitor Program [SEVP], 2020). Due to the pandemic, the United States closed its borders, causing international students to leave universities and colleges. Overall enrollment for international students in the US slipped by 1.8% in 2019-2020 compared with the prior academic year, the first decrease in international student enrollment since 2005-2006 (IIE, 2020).

The California state university (CSU) system, one of the largest in the United States, enrolled its largest-ever student body for the fall 2020 term (CSU, 2020). The 23 campuses of the university collectively enrolled 485,549 students, surpassing the previous enrollment high of 484,297 in fall 2017 and more than 3,600 students greater than fall 2019 (481,929; CSU, 2020). According to CSU's (2021) reports, "An analysis of student visa data suggests that in 2019 as many as 1,159,798 international students came to the U.S. to study at American colleges and universities" (para. 5). University of Southern California (USC) estimates that from this diverse international pool, it was home to approximately 11,308 international students (CSU, 2021, para. 5).

Sample

Patton (2012) stated, there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources. (p. 45)

The research sample consisted of participants studying in the US as a non-immigrant on a F-1 or J-1 Student Visa that was issued by an educational institution. The international students were enrolled in either a public or private southern California university for at least one full academic year.

The professional networks of the recruiter within southern California universities were used to request eight participants for this study. In addition, the researcher sought the assistance of the dean, advisors, and counselors of several universities' International Students Departments to screen potential participants to recommend for the study.

Patton (2012) stated, "the use of participants from diverse sources is a methodological strength of a qualitative study when the researcher has a broader interest than just a single source" (p. 151). International students enrolled in two separate southern California universities were recruited for the study. An international student advisor agreed to contact students to request their participation in the research. Four students from two different universities in southern California were recruited for the qualitative study. Participants were sent a Research Participants Bill of Rights (Appendix B) and a consent form as shown in Appendix C. The sampling pool for the study resulted

in four women and two men, six total participants. Participants of the research were interviewed online via the Zoom platform.

According to Shuttleworth (2008), researchers need to generalize and try to select a sample group that is representative of the whole population (p. 6). The emphasis of purposive sampling is not to generalize the sample to a wider population but rather to study information that is rich and illuminates the topic being examined (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the sample of international students selected to participate in the study was chosen by the aforementioned criteria.

Purposeful sampling was utilized in this study because it allowed the researcher to select the characteristics of the participants to be included in the study. A “phenomenological approach follows a purposive sampling strategy in that it can purposely inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The participants of the study were enrolled in a four-year university’s undergraduate degree program. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the logic of sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases (p. 328). Participant demographics were not variables of interest when recruiting students for this research.

The sample size of six provided the opportunity to collect in-depth data to reach significant conclusions. Regarding this, Patton (2012) asserted, “Determining your final sample size is a matter of intellectual judgment based on the logic of making meaningful comparisons, developing and testing your explanations” (p. 311). In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argued that the richness of the information gathered matters more

than the number of participants in the study. The purposeful sample of six students was selected based on the following criteria: (1) they must be a citizen of a foreign country, (2) they must currently be studying at a four-year university in the US, and (3) they must have a student F-1 or a J-1 visa.

Instrument

When deciding what types of instruments to use in qualitative research, Patton (2012) stated researchers can use unstructured interviews or direct and unstructured observations. In contrast, quantitative researchers prefer measures such as structured questionnaires or interview schedules with objective formats that produce data that can be easily reduced to numbers (Patton, 2002, p. 19). The initial process used by the researcher to develop primary instruments was to follow the criteria for selecting the appropriate participants for the study.

The primary instrument used to elicit qualitative data for the study was the interviews conducted by the researcher. While the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, "the researcher is the instrument" (Patton, 2001, p. 14). The researcher acknowledged that gathering and reviewing data can be impacted by the lens of our own experiences and biases. Additionally, researchers' fallacies can surface in how they assign importance to themes or in how they might unintentionally overlook certain data.

Selecting a methodology that allowed for the unearthing of phenomena from the perspective of how people interpret and attribute meaning to their existence was a technique used to address the researcher's biases. Qualitative semi-structured interview questions were developed that captured the phenomenon of international students' lived

experiences with acculturation network supports and barriers while attending a southern California university. The researcher used expert feedback and a literature review synthesis matrix to ensure interview questions were aligned to the research questions. The final interview protocol (Appendix D) included a script showcasing the study's purpose and an informed consent form. The protocol was pilot-tested by a volunteer who met the study's criteria but who was not part of the actual research. The volunteer gave feedback on the suitability and clarity of the interview questions, which were subsequently adjusted by peer researchers.

Validity and Reliability

Although some qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, they have realized the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research. For example, Creswell and Miller (2010) suggested that the validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and by their choice of paradigm assumption. The controversy amongst experts on the validity of qualitative designs is whether the researcher and the participants draw the same meaning for the study's conclusions of interpretations, observations, descriptions, and lived experiences.

Golafshani (2003) asserted both qualitative and quantitative researchers need to test and demonstrate that their studies are credible. When quantitative researchers speak of research validity and reliability, they are usually referring to research that is credible, while the credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher (Patton, 2001, p. 600). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) asserted that validity in qualitative research refers to the degree of congruence between the explanation

of the phenomena and the reality of the world. Thorne (2000) encouraged researchers to clearly communicate the logical processes by which findings were developed in a way that is accessible to a critical reader, so the claims made in relation to the data set are rendered credible and believable.

Strategies that the researcher utilized to reduce biases in this study were using the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR), selecting interview questions that aligned with the research questions, and choosing an appropriate data collection method. SRQR is a list of 21 items that are considered essential for complete transparency of all aspects of qualitative research by providing clear standards for reporting qualitative research (O'Brien et al., 2014, p. 2). Increasing the trustworthiness of the qualitative study can be achieved by utilizing the SRQR standards checklist. The researcher followed the SRQR standards when conducting the qualitative interview data collection.

A dissertation committee member who is an expert in qualitative research reviewed the questions to ensure there was alignment with this research study. Interviews are used primarily in phenomenology, in which the researcher is interested in the individual participant's lived experience rather than (a) a group process, as in grounded theory, or (b) examination of the culture of a particular group, which is the case in ethnography (Bolderston, 2012, p. 68.) The research content validation was established for the interview questions through the review of literature in Chapter II. Internal reliability was established by obtaining confirmed consent of the participants by issuing the preliminary synopsis of the research and asking the same questions to all participants of the study.

The researcher endeavored to restrict the study to a descriptive analysis rather than an interpretive or reflective method. The participants' perceptions of their lived experiences are discussed in Chapter IV. The researcher's role was to report the international students' perceptions regarding network support and barriers to acculturation while attending a university in southern California. Participants of the study were shown the transcripts of the interviews for verification of their statements and to provide the opportunity to clarify inconsistencies.

Joppe (2000) defined reliability as,

The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. (p. 1)

Although the term "reliability" is a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea is used in all kinds of research. Golafshani (2003) asserted that if testing is seen as a way of information elicitation, then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. First, the technique of rephrasing was employed to have a precise description of the international students' perceptions. During the interviews, the researcher restated the information received from the participants to ensure what was heard was correct.

Secondly, the interviews of the study were recorded instead of handwritten, which permitted the researcher to focus on attaining a clear understanding of responses. According to Jamshed et al. (2014), to have the interview data captured more effectively, recording the interviews is an appropriate choice but is sometimes a matter of

controversy among the researcher and the respondent. Handwritten notes during the interview are relatively unreliable, and the researcher might miss some key points.

The researcher recorded all interviews with participants' consent. Interviews were conducted on a Zoom virtual conference and were recorded using this platform system. To increase the reliability of the data for this study, the researcher had all of the interview voice recordings transcribed. Transcripts of the interviews were shown to the participants of the study to ensure that the data which produced the findings were an accurate depiction of their lived experiences.

The use of participants from diverse sources is a methodological strength of a quality study when the researcher has a broader interest than just a single source such as a single campus (Patton, 2002, p. 151). The researcher in this study used field notes, literature from postsecondary institutions, and the responses from the interviews to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon. Data obtained from the international students' interviews were shared with the participating southern California universities.

Data Collection

Busetto et al. (2020) asserted that the “most common methods of data collection are document study, (non-) participant observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups” (para. 1). The method the researcher utilized to collect data is described in detail in this chapter to permit duplication of the study. International students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience were explored.

The rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research studies are protected by institutional review boards (IRB, Purdue University, 2021) to ensure research is conducted ethically by faculty, staff, and students. Prior to commencing the study, the researcher submitted to the Brandman University IRB (BUIRB) a request to conduct the research that included the selection process and procedures for recruiting international students. The mission of the BUIRB is to protect the rights of human or animal participants in research studies, and it will only approve experiments that conform to the professional standards as understood within the relevant discipline (BUIRB, 2021). In addition, prior to conducting the research, a consent form providing detailed information regarding the purpose of the study was provided to the students. In addition, students were advised of their right to decline to participate in the study at any point during the interview and of their right to privacy.

The researcher's application to the BUIRB was approved to recruit non-native English speaking international students enrolled in a four-year degree program in southern California (Appendix E). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the BUIRB is "responsible for approving human subject research, ensuring that appropriate ethical and legal guidelines are followed" (p. 123). Letters and emails were sent to the deans of five International Students departments in southern California universities to request assistance to recruit students for the study. The study was conducted with six participants from two universities in southern California. Email addresses, phone numbers, and home addresses were collected for the participants to provide the students with a synopsis of the study and a Participants of Bill of Rights (Appendix B). To

coordinate the interview dates and times with the participants, a phone call or a follow up email was sent to the students.

Patten (2012) argued that interviews are best suited to obtain the lived experiences of participants in qualitative research (p. 9). Qualitative research is collected through semi-structured interviews consisting of a set of predesignated questions that the researcher can deviate from if necessary to garner further information (Patton, 2012). The format of the interview questions to the participants was semi-structured to allow them to define the phenomenon from their own perspectives.

Participants were asked the same questions to ensure consistency in the study. However, the researcher had the liberty to adjust the interview questions based on the student's answers or to obtain more in-depth information on their perceptions. In semi-structured interviews, "the researcher not only follows some preset questions but also includes additional questions in response to participant comments and reactions" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359). The researcher explored through the semi-structured interviews whether the students perceived support systems with acculturation were in place at the university they were attending.

Patton (2012) asserted, "The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (p. 21). Qualitative researchers are open to the possibility of making adjustments in their measures, such as rewording questions or adding questions based on earlier responses by participants (Patten, 2012). Thus, it was important that the

researcher confirmed with the participants of the study whether their perceptions collected were accurately captured.

Data Analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained, “The analysis is done during data collection as well as after all the data have been gathered. Data collection and analysis are interwoven, influencing one another” (p. 367). Researchers need to be aware of their influences in each phase of a study. When conducting data analysis, the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis, making judgments about coding, theming, decontextualizing, and re-contextualizing the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Prior to the data analysis, the responses to the semi-structured interviews and field notes of this study were transcribed verbatim by using Scribie transcription service. Transcription is the process of taking notes and other information and converting them into a format that will facilitate analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Daily, the recording of the interviews and field notes was transcribed and analyzed for common themes. The data were also analyzed for issues that could have emerged during the interviews of the international students.

According to Creswell (2007), “Researchers find quotes and themes in words of participants and this provides the evidence of different perspectives” (p. 17). The process of organizing data can be to turn them into codes, then into condensed common themes, and then into groups and categories with similar headings. The researcher employed the inductive content analysis qualitative method to identify key themes and categories in the data from recordings and written hand notes. Mayring (2015) declared this is useful in approaching new data where categories have yet to be determined but must be

created for more precise methods of analysis to work effectively. Kokemuller (2021) argued that quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis exist, but the inductive content analysis qualitative method enables researchers to analyze data in areas in which only limited knowledge exists (para. 5).

Coding

Text must be coded, or broken down, into manageable code categories for analysis. Once the text is coded into categories, the codes can be further categorized into categories to summarize data even further (Columbia University, 2021). Jansen (2007) described coding as a practical way to connect the data gathered from the field with theoretical concepts propounded in literature; coding makes raw data sortable. The coding process for analyzing the interviews of the participants in this study was adopted from Medelyan (2021), who exhorted researchers that before starting qualitative data coding, they need to decide whether to use the deductive coding or inductive coding approach.

Medelyan (2021) explained that deductive coding calls for researchers to start with a predefined set of codes and then assign those codes to the new qualitative data. These codes might come from themes the researcher is interested in analyzing. In contrast, inductive coding, also called open coding, starts from scratch and involves creating codes based on the qualitative data itself. A set codebook is not required; all codes arise directly from the survey responses (Medelyan, 2021, para. 11). The researcher employed the inductive coding approach in this study to manually analyze, reanalyze, and compare new data obtained through the interviews and hand notes.

A qualitative data analysis software called NVivo 12 was used to compare the manually coded themes from the interview notes and categories. Brant and Charmaz (2010) affirmed the software can be a useful tool as a repository and for sorting through data but not as a primary coding source. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important in establishing trustworthiness.

Intercoder Reliability

O'Connor and Joffe (2020) described the numerous benefits qualitative studies can yield from conducting an intercoder reliability assessment as improved systematicity, communicability, and transparency of the coding process; promoting reflexivity and dialogue within research teams; and helping convince diverse audiences of the trustworthiness of the analysis. McDonald et al. (2019) concluded that conducting inter-rater reliability does not make sense (a) when developing codes is part of the process, (b) when there is a single researcher, and (c) where analysis is driven by participants' own interpretations of their data. In this study, the researcher did not conduct inter-rater reliability based on McDonald's premise. However, the researcher did conduct intercoder reliability. The researcher initially sought another qualitative expert to review the semi-structured interview questions created for the study to secure initial reliability for the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined intercoder reliability as when two or more people agree about what they have seen, heard, or rated.

Limitations

When describing limitations, authors should identify the limitation type to clearly introduce the limitation and specify the origin of the limitation (Ross & Zaidi, 2019, para.

7). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) found that some participants for a study are difficult to locate; others are easy to locate (p. 328). A limitation of this qualitative study was access to international students. Some international students returned home during the pandemic due to health concerns and due to the U.S.'s closing of its borders. Worried about health risks in the US, parents might have forbidden new students from starting at American schools (Gordon, 2020, para. 7). Further, the study was limited by the perceptions of the six participants.

This study's sample size was another limitation. Patten (2012) stated the quality of a sample affects the quality of the inferences made from a sample to the general population. Thus, a poor sample is likely to lead to incorrect inferences. Patton (2012) stated the problem of small samples in qualitative inquiry occurs when the purpose is generalizing from a sample to the population of which it is a part. In purposeful sampling, Patton (2012) further stated that utility and credibility of small purposeful samples are often judged on the basis of the logic, purpose, and recommended sample sizes of probability sampling (p. 245). However, insight generated from qualitative inquiry depends more on the information richness of the cases and the analytical capabilities of the researcher than on the sample size (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 328).

In addition, the researcher's role in qualitative research presents another limitation. Qualitative researchers usually use less-structured measures than quantitative researchers (Patten, 2010, p. 173). Patten (2010) asserted qualitative researchers can find it difficult to describe the essences of a trait, such as participants' feelings (p. 62). Patten (2012) conveyed that in semi-structured interviews, the qualitative interviewer does not

need to ask only the predetermined questions; therefore, the interviewer must be skilled because they are not simply following a predetermined script. A danger is that the researcher might draw a different conclusion from the data that could impact the generalization of the study. In this study, the researcher took the measures outlined in the Data Collection section to mitigate this limitation.

Summary

The major global movement of foreign students coming to the US to study led to an increase in recruitment of international students by postsecondary institutions in southern California. This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to address the gaps in the literature review of international students' lived experiences with acculturation support networks and barriers experienced. The criteria for the participants of this study were that they be a citizen of a foreign country studying at a four-year university in the US on a student F-1 or a J-1 visa.

Semi-structured interviews were used to understand the perceptions of international students studying in southern California universities. The researcher's technique to capture the phenomenon was to (a) use an inductive process to organize the data and field notes, (b) organize the data into codes and themes, and (c) examine the literature review. The findings of the study can contribute to a better understanding of policy and social issues in universities. The qualitative methodology described in Chapter III was used to select study participants, conduct the interviews, gather data, and find common themes to draw a conclusion regarding the research that was conducted. The data from this conducted research are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

The objective of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore international students' lived experiences regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers they encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university. The purpose statement, research questions, methodology, and data collection process are restated in Chapter IV. In addition, the population, sampling frame, sample, and demographic data for this study are discussed in this chapter. The analysis of the data and a summary of the study conclude this chapter.

Chapter IV will delve into the network supports and challenges international students have experienced while attending a southern California university. Through their international educational experiences, the students have gained intercultural communication skills, heightened awareness of a second culture, and a broadened perspective of the world. Parents of international students view the opportunity to study in the US as the beginning of a better life for their children.

Countries that host foreign students also experience various benefits, including increased enrollment in their programs, which can lead to increased revenue. International students also increase the social and cultural diversity of college campuses, enriching the learning environment and helping home students develop internationally relevant skills (Hughes, 2019, p. 1). Not only do the educational institutions benefit, but international students also benefit the local economies by purchasing food, traveling necessities, and housing. Due to the appeal of increased revenue through international

student enrollment, many academic institutions fill their budget gaps by enrolling as many international students as possible (Redding, 2013).

Chavajay (2013) stated several studies focused on cultural adaptation indicate that international students report feelings of guilt and loneliness when leaving relatives and friends behind in their native countries. In addition, foreign students find it challenging to interact with students and staff due to cultural differences. The support that international students appear to obtain from people of the host country has been reported to be infrequent and superficial, consisting mainly of information such as housing accommodation and directions (Chavajay, 2013). The students are expected to handle the same rigorous academic demands as their domestic counterparts but in an unfamiliar linguistic, academic, and cultural environment. International students within the US face five common challenges: language, culture, social interactions, education, and finances.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore international students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers they encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new cultural experience?

2. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of barriers encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience?

Research Methodology and Data Collection Procedures

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described the qualitative research design ethnography as a description and interpretation of a culture of a shared group or a system where the focus is on learned patterns of actions, languages, belief, rituals, and ways of life (p. 23). The ethnography research designs differ from the phenomenology research design in that it involves prolonged field work involving observation of a shared group or activity in which group artifacts are collected and casual interviews are conducted with participants about their daily lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Ethnography was considered an improper design for this study because it does not allow for in-depth investigation into the study's phenomenon.

Qualitative research was the methodology used for this study because it was the approach best suited to gain a better understanding of international students' collegial life through firsthand interviews regarding their experiences. Patton (2012) described an interview as a series of open-ended questions that generate thorough answers regarding people's experiences and perspectives about a topic. The interpretations of the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences are the essence of qualitative inquiry. A qualitative research methodology was an appropriate way of exploring international students' perceptions regarding (a) support from southern California universities to help them adapt to a new culture experience and (b) barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience.

As outlined by Stake (2010), a qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation. The perceptions of six international students studying in a southern California university were captured through interviews that produced the data analyzed in this study. The instrument of the semi-structured interview questions was created with the assistance of a qualitative expert. The study has two research questions that were aligned with seven interview questions and four probing questions. Emails were sent to the international students requesting their participation. The emails included the purpose of the study, the interview consent form, and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights. The interviews of the study participants were conducted and recorded on the online platform Zoom. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo to find minor and major themes to code the data. Inductive coding was used by the researcher to analyze the data. Chandra and Shang (2019) described inductive coding as a data analysis process whereby the researcher reads and interprets raw textual data to develop concepts, themes, or a process model through interpretations based on data (Chandra & Shang, 2019).

Busetto et al. (2020) asserted that the "most common methods of data collection are document study, (non-) participant observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups" (para. 1). The method the researcher utilized to collect data is described in this chapter to permit duplication of the study. International students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience were explored.

The rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research studies are protected by institutional review boards (IRB, Purdue University, 2021) to ensure research is conducted ethically by faculty, staff, and students. Prior to commencing the study, the researcher submitted to the Brandman University IRB (BUIRB) a request to conduct the research that included the selection process and procedures for recruiting international students. The mission of the BUIRB is to protect the rights of human or animal participants in research studies, and it will only approve experiments that conform to the professional standards as understood within the relevant discipline (BUIRB, 2021). In addition, prior to conducting the research, a consent form providing detailed information regarding the purpose of the study was provided to the students. Furthermore, students were advised of their right to decline to participate in the study at any point during the interview and of their right to privacy.

The researcher's application to the BUIRB was approved to recruit non-native English speaking international students enrolled in a four-year degree program in southern California (Appendix E). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the BUIRB is "responsible for approving human subject research, ensuring that appropriate ethical and legal guidelines are followed" (p. 123). Letters and emails were sent to the deans of five International Students departments in southern California universities to request assistance to recruit students for the study. The study was conducted with six participants from two universities in southern California. Email addresses, phone numbers, and home addresses were collected for the participants to provide the students with a synopsis of the study and a Participant's of Bill of Rights (Appendix B). To

coordinate the interview meeting places, dates, and times with the participants, a phone call or a follow up email was sent to the students.

Patten (2012) argued that interviews are best suited to obtain the lived experiences of participants in qualitative research (p. 9). Qualitative research is collected through semi-structured interviews consisting of a set of predesignated questions that the researcher can deviate from if necessary to garner further information (Patton, 2012). The format of the interview questions to the participants was semi-structured to allow them to define the phenomenon from their own perspectives.

Participants were asked the same questions to ensure consistency in the study. However, the researcher had the liberty to adjust the interview questions based on the student's answers or to obtain more in-depth information on their perceptions. In semi-structured interviews, "the researcher not only follows some preset questions but also includes additional questions in response to participant comments and reactions" (Savin-Baden & Majore, 2013, p. 359). The researcher explored through the semi-structured interviews whether the students perceived support systems with acculturation are in place at the university they were attending.

Patton (2012) asserted, "The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (p. 21). Qualitative researchers are open to the possibility of making adjustments in their measures, such as rewording questions or adding questions based on earlier responses by participants (Patten, 2012). Thus, it was important for the

researcher to confirm with the participants of the study whether their perceptions collected were accurately captured.

Intercoder Reliability

McDonald et al. (2019) concluded that conducting inter-rater reliability does not make sense (a) when developing codes is part of the process, (b) when there is a single researcher, and (c) where analysis is driven by participants' own interpretations of their data. In this study, the researcher did not conduct inter-rater reliability based on McDonald's premise. However, the researcher did conduct intercoder reliability. The researcher initially sought another qualitative expert to review the semi-structured interview questions created for the study to secure initial reliability for the study.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined intercoder reliability as when two or more people agree about what they have seen, heard, or rated.

Previous research (Campbell et al., 2013; Krippendorff, 2004; Popping, 2010) has illustrated that the distinction between intercoder reliability and agreement is important to make because intercoder reliability requires that two or more equally capable coders operating in isolation from each other select the same code for the same unit of text. The researcher had two separate qualitative experts review data for this study. The process used for coding the two transcripts of the interviews for this study was reviewed by an expert in qualitative research; this is how intercoder reliability was established.

Furthermore, the expert qualitative researcher and this researcher met to discuss the common and major themes to reach a consensus on the data analysis for this study.

O'Connor and Joffe (2020) described the numerous benefits qualitative studies can yield from conducting an intercoder reliability assessment as (a) improved systematicity,

communicability, and transparency of the coding process; (b) promoting reflexivity and dialogue within research teams; and (c) helping convince diverse audiences of the trustworthiness of the analysis.

Population

The population for this study consisted of participants born in a foreign country studying in the US on a student F-1 or J-1 visa. According to California State University's (2021) report, "An analysis of student visa data suggests that in 2019 as many as 1,159,798 international students came to the U.S. to study at American colleges and universities" (para. 5). Students were approved by a southern California university to attend an educational institution in the state. English did not have to be the student's first language, but all participants were required to be fluent in English to participate in the research study. The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2020) revealed that for the fifth consecutive year, the United States hosted more than one million international students (1,075,496) during the 2019/2020 academic year.

Overall, China has the highest percentage of students at U.S. colleges of any country, comprising 34.6% of the total. Of the international student population in the US in 2019-2020, 18% was from India, and 4.6% hailed from South Korea. In the school year 2019-20, one in three international students studied in California, New York, or Texas. Other leading host states were Massachusetts, Illinois, and Pennsylvania (see Table 1). International students have also increased as a share of all students enrolled in U.S. higher education: from 1% in 1949-1950 to nearly 6% in 2019-20 (Israel & Batalove, 2021, para. 9; see Figure 4).

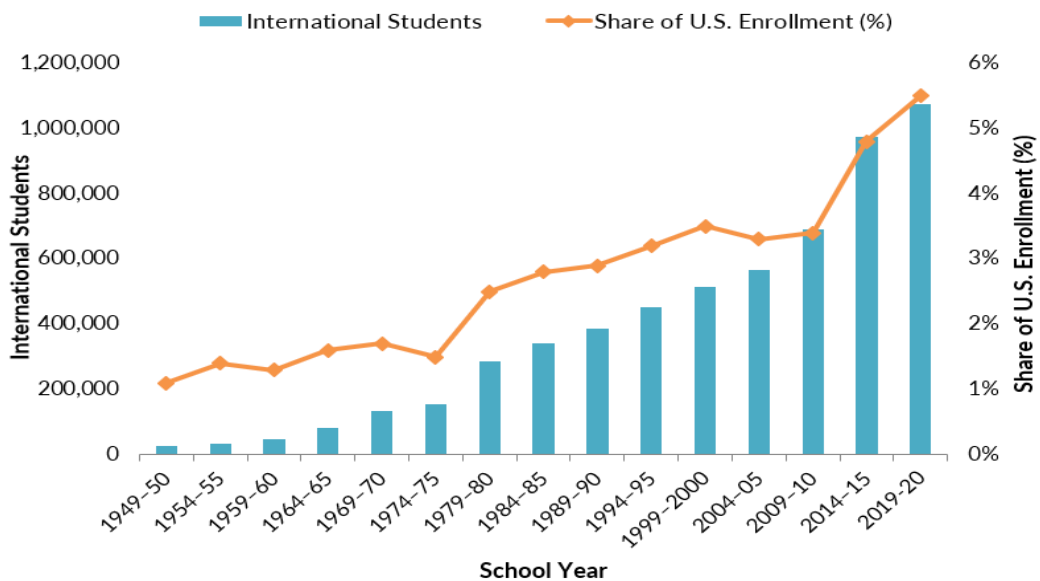
Table 1

Top Ten US Schools with the Most International Students in 2019-2020

| Institution | International Students |
|---|------------------------|
| All U.S. Institutions | 1,075,496 |
| New York University | 21,093 |
| Northeastern University - Boston | 17,491 |
| University of Southern California | 17,309 |
| Columbia University | 17,145 |
| University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign | 13,962 |
| Arizona State University - Tempe | 13,136 |
| University of California - Los Angeles | 11,447 |
| University of California - San Diego | 11,272 |
| Purdue University - West Lafayette | 11,173 |
| Boston University | 11,158 |

Note. (IIE, Open Doors: Report on International Education Exchange, 2020 Fast Facts)

Figure 4. International Students' Enrollment from School Year 1945 to 2020



Sample

Patton (2012) stated, there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources. (p. 45)

In nonprobability convenience sampling, “respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability” (Creswell, 2014, p. 204). In this study, the researcher used purposeful convenience sampling to select the participants. Robinson (2014) explained that purposive sampling consists of intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon. The international students were enrolled in either a public or private southern California university for at least one full academic year. The professional networks of the researcher within southern California universities were used to request six participants for this study. In addition, the researcher sought the assistance of the dean, advisors, and counselors of several universities' International Students departments to screen potential participants to recommend for the study.

Patton (2012) stated, “the use of participants from diverse sources is a methodological strength of a qualitative study when the researcher has a broader interest than just a single source” (p. 151). International students enrolled in two separate southern California universities were recruited for the study. International student advisors provided the list of students' names and email addresses to request their participation in the research. Six students were recruited from the two participating

universities in southern California. The sampling pool for the study resulted in four women and two men being interviewed. Participants of the study were interviewed by the researcher on the Zoom platform.

According to Shuttlesworth (2008), researchers need to generalize and try to select a sample group that is representative of the whole population (p. 6). The emphasis of purposive sampling is not to generalize the sample to a wider population but rather to study information that is rich and illuminates the topic being examined (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the sample of international students selected to participate in the study was chosen according to the aforementioned criteria. Purposeful sampling was utilized in this study because it allows the researcher to select the characteristics of the participants to be included in the study.

The sample size of six provided the opportunity to collect in-depth data to reach significant conclusions. Regarding this, Patton (2012) asserted, “Determining your final sample size is a matter of intellectual judgment based on the logic of making meaningful comparisons, developing and testing your explanations” (p. 311). In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argued that the richness of the information gathered matters more than the number of participants in the study. The purposeful sample of six students was selected based on the following criteria: (1) they must be a citizen of a foreign country, (2) they must currently be studying at a four-year university in the US, and (3) they must have a student F-1 or a J-1 visa.

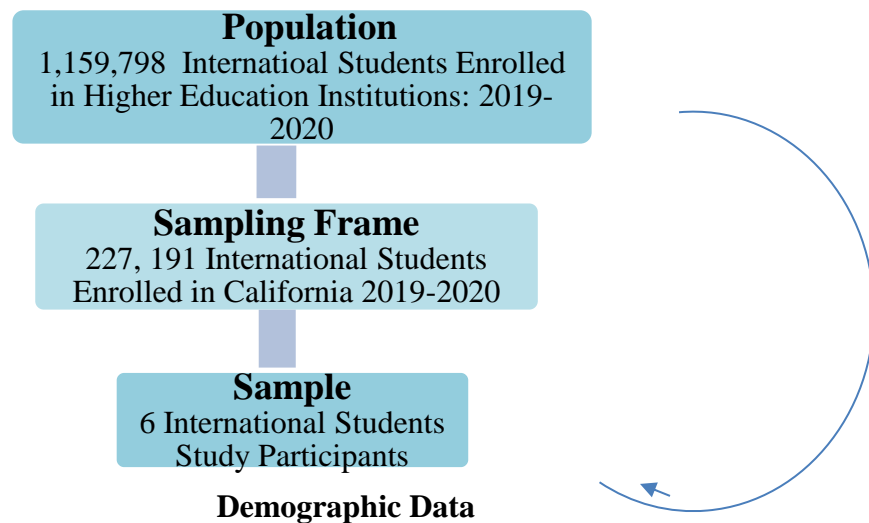
According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the logic of sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases (p. 328). Participant demographics were not

variables of interest when recruiting students for this research but have been provided for use in further research studies.

Six international students who selected the US as their destination to study abroad for a degree program were the participants in this study. Each of the international students attended a university in southern California. Participants had been studying in the US for at least one year at a university. English did not have to be the student's first language, but all participants needed to be fluent in English to participate in the research study. Confidentiality of the demographic information for the students who participated in the one-on-one interviews was maintained by assigning numbers to each of them.

Figure 5 illustrates the study's population, sampling frame, and sample.

Figure 5. Study Population, Sample, and Sampling Frame



Salkind (2010) described demographic data in research as data that are necessary to determine whether individuals in a particular study are a representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes. The participants in this qualitative research study were six international students mainly from different parts of Asia. One

participant's parents were from the southeast Asian countries of Cambodia and Vietnam. Another study participant was from Turkey, which is partly in Asia and partly in Europe. Nigeria was the only country from the African continent. Japan and China were the home countries of two other study participants. India, a south Asian country, was the other participant's home country. The sample of six international students consisted of four women and two men. The university class designation included three seniors, two sophomores, and one junior. Based on the university class designations, the researcher has approximated the ages of the participants as 20 to 28 years. The sample comprised four undergraduate students and two graduate students. Table 2 shows participants' demographic data.

Table 2

Demographic Data of Study Participants

| No. | Gender of Participant | Participant's Home Country | University's Number | Designation |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 | F | Turkey | University 1 | Junior |
| 2 | M | Vietnam/Cambodia | University 1 | Sophomore |
| 3 | F | Japan | University 1 | Senior |
| 4 | F | Nigeria | University 2 | Senior |
| 5 | F | China | University 2 | Sophomore |
| 6 | M | India | University 2 | Senior |

Presentation and Analysis of Data

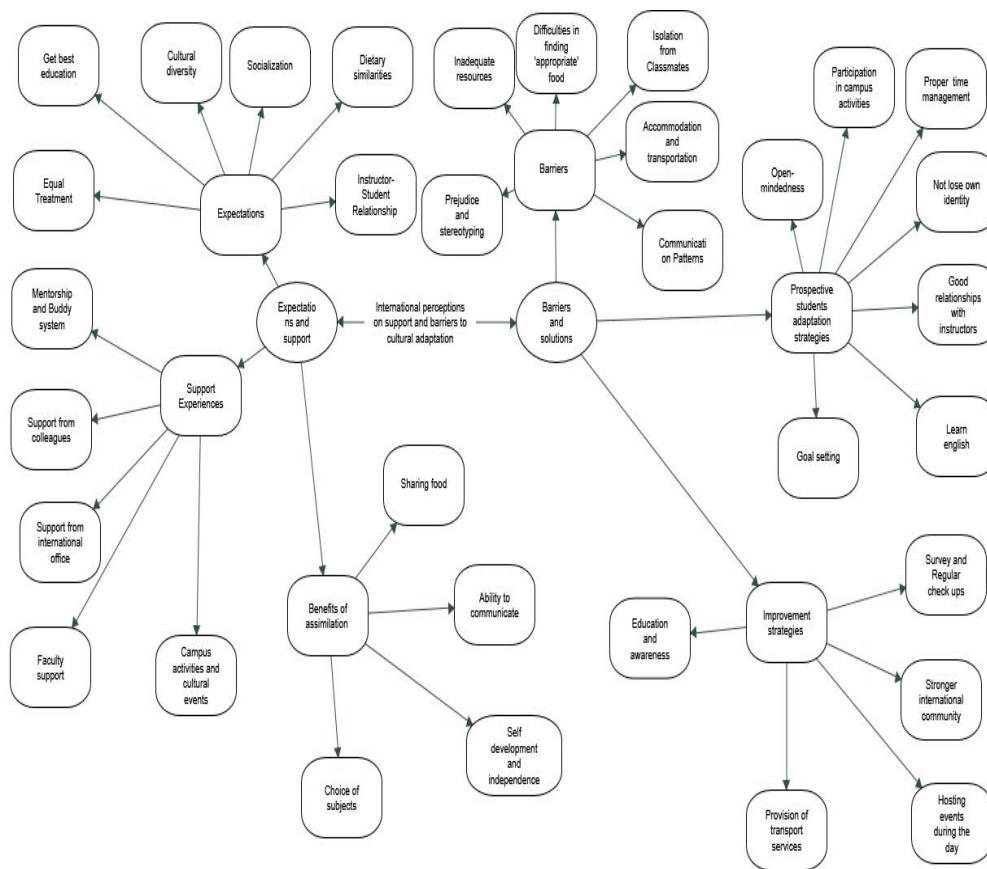
McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained, “The analysis is done during data collection as well as after all the data have been gathered” (p. 367). Six international students participated in the semi-structured interviews that provided rich data for the study. During the interviews, the researcher asked clarifying questions to participants’ responses and comments that were unclear. Prior to the data analysis, (a) participants’ responses in the semi-structured interviews and (b) the researcher’s field notes from this study were transcribed verbatim by using Scribie transcription software. Transcription is the process of taking notes and other information and converting them into a format that will facilitate analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Daily, the recording of the interviews and the researcher’s field notes were transcribed to upload to NVivo. NVivo was used to identify major and minor common themes from the transcriptions, and it was also used for coding.

According to Creswell (2007), “Researchers find quotes and themes in words of participants and this provides the evidence of different perspectives” (p. 17). The process of organizing data can be to turn them into codes, then into condensed common themes, and then into groups and categories with similar headings. The researcher employed the inductive content analysis qualitative method to identify key themes and categories in the data from recordings and written hand notes. Mayring (2020) declared this is useful in approaching new data where categories have yet to be determined but must be created for more precise methods of analysis to work effectively. The researcher created a list of all the themes identified and coded to organize the coded themes for data analysis.

Data by Analysis of Research Questions

The presentation and analysis of the data is organized by the responses to the two research questions and corresponding questions in Appendix B. The rich data obtained through the semi-structured interview questions produced common themes identified during the coding. Figure 6 is a visual representation of themes and subthemes from international students' lived experiences regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and barriers to their successful adaptation to a new culture experience while enrolled in a Southern California university.

Figure 6. Overall Themes and Concept Map

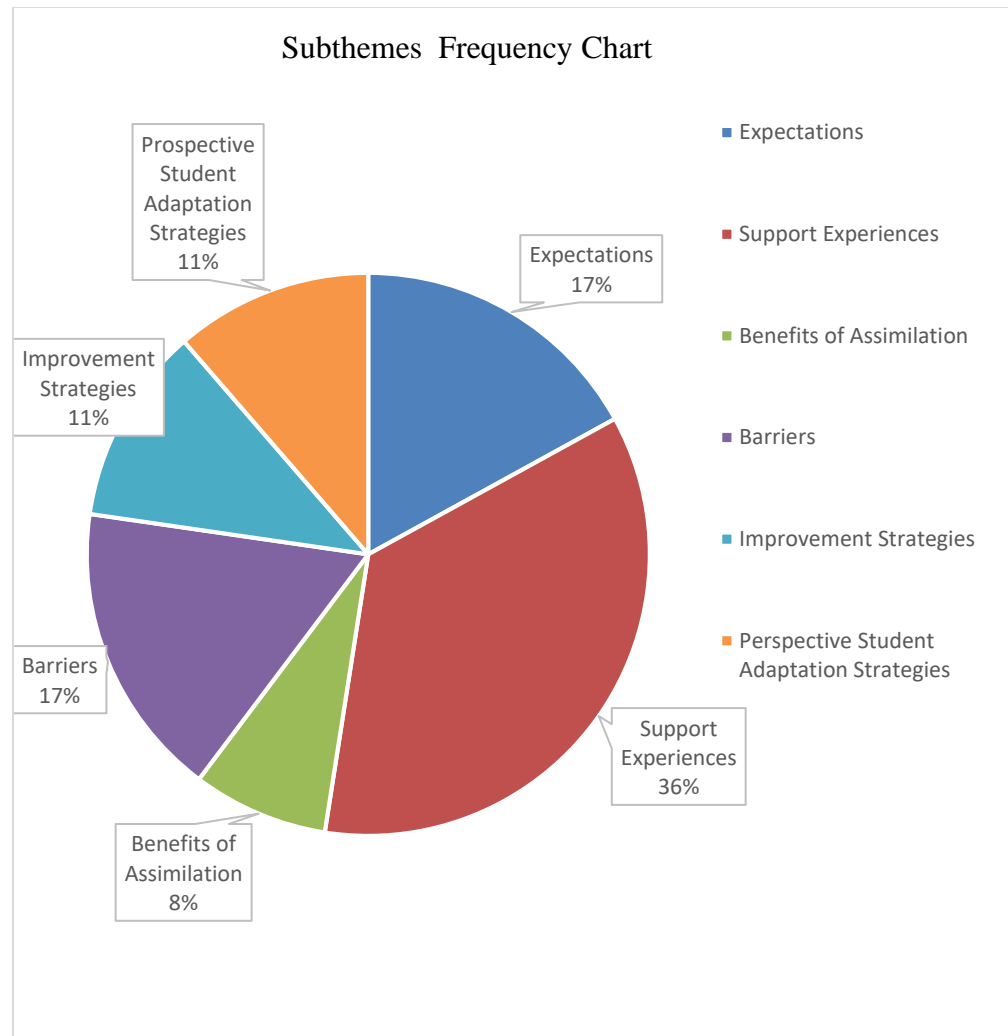


1. Expectations and Support

The above figure illustrates the major themes and subthemes from the

qualitative analysis. Six themes and 141 frequencies emerged from the major finding related to (1) expectations and support and (2) barriers and support. Data analysis began after reviewing the transcripts of the study participants (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Subtheme Frequency Chart



Based on the participants' interviews, two major themes and six subthemes emerged from the data. Thematic analysis is good for exploring patterns across qualitative data from participants, and researchers often use this to analyze interviews. The first major theme was expectations and support, and the corresponding subthemes

were expectation, support experiences, and benefits of assimilation. The second major theme that emerged from the semi-structured interview data was barriers and support, which generated the following subthemes: barriers, improvement strategies, and prospective student’s adaptation strategies. The most frequent subtheme that emerged was participants’ support experiences, which accounted for 36% of the data. After that, participants most frequently discussed their expectations and their barriers; both of these subthemes accounted for 17% of the data. Participants discussed their adaptation strategies and improvement strategies with equal frequency (11%). The least-frequently mentioned subtheme was benefits of assimilation, which accounted for 8% of the data.

Expectations. The subthemes identified during coding pertaining to the study participants’ expectations are illustrated in Table 3. The five subthemes under the larger theme of expectations will be analyzed.

Table 3

Expectations Themes

| Themes | Cultural diversity | Dietary Similarities | Equal Treatment | Get best Education | Instructor Student Relationship |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Total | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Sources | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Percentage | 23.5 % | 23.5% | 11.7% | 11.7% | 29.6% |
| Frequency | | | | | |

Cultural diversity. Participants expected to see a diversity of cultures in the US and from other international students. Participants stated that depictions of the US in movies and television shows molded their perceptions of what U.S. culture on college campuses would resemble. Regarding expectations, cultural diversity was tied for the second highest frequency percentage (23.5%). Participant 6 expected that people would appreciate their culture, but he said it felt like there was a common culture. People were not strongly tied to their cultural identities, and they did not identify with their cultural communities or know certain aspects about their culture. Participant 6 explained,

In terms of southern California, I just had this expectation that it would be more diverse, but it turned out like I had a huge culture shock. I guess, when I came to California specifically I think my university and the city of Orange is not as diverse. I am coming from a diverse background. I was definitely a little bit shocked. I felt like people would have a closer sense of cultural identity, but I found the opposite, which kind of in a weird way brought me closer to my own cultural identity because it was like I'm lacking something, I guess, from my surrounding environment.

Participant 5 expected to experience cultures from different countries, but only Caucasian and Hispanic cultures were dominant,

I expect it to be a lot more diverse actually because it is in southern California, but um it is more of like a Caucasian and Hispanic student. And yeah, I expected to be like with also different cultures, from different countries around the world, but I mostly see Caucasian [and] Hispanic students. That was a shock.

Dietary similarities. Participants reported that they expected to see similarities in

how people in America ate compared to how people ate in their home countries. The subtheme of dietary similarities was tied for the second most frequently mentioned subtheme under expectations (23.5%). Participant 2 stated that in Japan, everyone places food on several plates and selects a few items on each plate, but in America, people put all the food they are going to eat on one plate. Participant 2 stated,

Based on how they eat the food everyone put here in the United States is a one-plate rule you put everything in one place. But in Japan, you put meals in like in the middle of the table in everyone have their little side dish that they pick it from. Participant 4 added that she expected to be included in activities concerning food, such as being invited to eat out together with other students. Sharing food at potluck activities gave Participant 6 an experience like what he was used to at home, “Just like the potlucks activity experiences back home-it was like growing up. We brought food to share at school; it gave me like a sense of connection to back home. I enjoy being able to share food”.

Equal treatment. Participants had varied expectations regarding how local and international students would be treated. Participant 1 pointed out that international students were not given the same resources and opportunities as local students,

In California, we have a perception of equality that we assume, “Okay, so we are in America, and it is the most developed country on earth; [it] will be equal like treated as equal and not inferior or anything”. Student services side met people from the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, the Middle East everywhere, and the common thing that we shared was that we were not being granted as many resources as we deserve.

On the other hand, Participant 2 expected the treatment between local and international students to be different, “I knew that the thought is going to be different, like the way we think is going to be different, the way we treat people is going to be different like”. The frequency percentage was 11.7% for equal treatment as well as for the following subtheme.

Getting the best education. Participants expected to experience the best education. Participants were used to more theory classes in their home countries, so they were surprised when they had lessons that were more practical in America. Participant 1 said, “I can pretty much say in terms of all international students, we all look towards US as a moderate utopia, like it as a perfect nation, and we need to be here to get the best education possible”. Participant 5 declared,

It is more like, you know how in some culture and some school, they just like give you information, like, “Oh, this is this, this is that, as this is the theory and all that you know”. I do not expect to be receiving practical information, but I also want to explore to study here, about how it is like this is how the theory is put into practice, but like what do you think about that topic and analyze.

Instructor-student relationship. Participants did not expect to receive support from the instructors at U.S. universities because they did not receive such support in their home countries. Participants viewed this unexpected instructor support as important for their academic achievement. This subtheme had the highest frequency among all the subthemes under expectations. Participants reported that the student-teacher ratio was very small in their university, which led to more interactions. Participant 2 expressed,

The other ones are the size of the colleges is really depending on where you go. It

is different here in the United States. I see many campuses that focus on the group size, because they want to focus on the student. You know the ratio between the student and the teacher and based on different university, they just say, “oh yeah, we are well known, so we just have to contain many students in one class per day, you know for one teacher”.

According to Participant 3, students in America interacted more with their professors compared to students in China. Students in America were encouraged to express themselves, but in China, there was no such freedom. Participant 5 added that in coming to America, she expected a close relationship between instructors and students,

I think that people are more open minded compared to the ones in China. Critical thinking is encouraged in American culture, and my students are probably encouraged to interact with a professor and then later asked questions. However, stuff like that are not encouraged in China. So yeah, and then I think that there is more freedom in the university in the US.

Socialization. Participants reported that they expected to see similarities and differences in the way people socialized. Participant 2 said people in Japan did not greet by hugging, so he expected to experience the same in America. However, people in America greeted by hugging. In addition, in Japan, people were straightforward, but in America, people were sensitive regarding what they said. Participant 2 explained,

In Japan, they are very straightforward. This is a bad to tell people here, but it is true in Japan. If they see someone that is like a little bit overweight even though it's your first time to meet them, they will tell you that you should lose a little weight, or you know, while you're eating they would say that is fattening food.

To say things like that is really a bad habit, but here it's a very sensitive topic to talk about weight.

Participant 3 pointed out that in China, people were very antisocial and more focused on studies. But in America, people both studied and enjoyed life. In addition, because of American movies, Participant 3 expected to see people partying and taking drugs,

I visit several places around my private university, and I realized the environment is actually a lot better than the one in Illinois. At least there is not very many bars around my campus, but I was still expecting people to party because Americans looks like a partying place, but I think there is a good atmosphere at this private university that people kind of focus on their study more.

Support experiences. The subthemes identified during coding for the study participants' experiences with support are illustrated in Table 4. The frequency numbers and percentages for the participants' support experiences are listed.

Table 4

Support Experiences Themes

| Themes | Campus Activities/Events | Faculty Support | Mentorship/ Buddy System | Support from Locals | Support from International Office |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Total | 5 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Sources | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 14 | 12 | 9 | 8 | 7 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| Percentage | 28 % | .24 % | 18 % | 16 % | 14 % |
| Frequency | | | | | |

Campus activities and cultural events. Participants stated that they were involved in campus and cultural activities, and this assisted them with adapting to the new cultural experience in the university. This subtheme had the highest frequency percentage (28%). Through trips and interaction with people during campus events, Participant 1 said that her English usage greatly improved,

I was interacting with because I was working as the student coordinator, and I was in the all the TRIPs and all where he was being planned by our office. So, I was interacting with a lot of people that helped me learn the language, like my English was good. I was spent time with other local student, but it polishes you right when you're conversing with other people, and like learning from them, and it also helped me.

Participant 2 noted that there were cultural events organized on campus that enabled him to understand cultural differences and also appreciate food from other cultures,

And what they do, they make games; they talk about different culture, and based on that culture differences, they do little like events by providing food that is from their country and whatnot. So that kind of help to for students to adapt in because we learn as we learn.

In addition, Participant 3 stated that through Christian fellowship, she was able to travel and experience new places. Furthermore, Participant 6 joined music and sport groups that helped him adapt to life in America.

Faculty support. The teaching staff assisted new international students in adapting to the American education system. Participant 3 said instructors were very supportive during lessons and also in exams, “The teachers were being really nice to me to live, like she provided extra help and allow me to use my dictionary during exams, but I didn't really want that, because on what I know it's my second language”. Participant 5 highlighted that the gap between instructors and students in India was so big that she could not have a relationship with her teachers. However, in America, the gap was small, and professors were supportive and in touch with students,

The gap between you and the professor was too much; it was very hard for you to be in touch with the professor and get the understanding or get the solutions for your problem. I used to always see, like you know in US, like you know the strength of the classes very small. It's like 20 students, 25 students, and because of this, this is a very strong reason why you're able to get in touch with your professors.

According to Participant 6, professors spared time to meet with students outside classroom hours. This kind of support was important for international students; hence, this subtheme had the second-highest frequency percentage (24%).

Mentorship and buddy system. New international students were paired with local students so that they could look after each other. Participant 1 stated she shared an apartment with local students. Local students were supposed to take care of the international students,

In our first semester, we were paired up like to internationals, so we had a housing system, like this is a specific thing... So, we have a housing system where we

have an apartment that is shared by four students. It's a two-bedroom apartment shared by four students. So, one bedroom would be a pair of international students and other bedroom would be a pair of domestic students.

International students were also allocated mentors. Participant 2 reported that people volunteered to become mentors to new students. There was a club for people interested in guiding international students,

The people who work in the offices were trying to gather to students with other mentors. From the school down, whom voluntarily you know wants to help the international student, and they make the international student club, which is so you have international student and then the people who are interested in the international students.

Participant 5 stated that friends made sure international students were able to communicate and interact with people around them. In addition, before going to America, prospective students were allocated a person in America through the buddy program to assist them in transitioning smoothly. Participant 5 explained, “She is to always make sure that you have to sit with someone else, so that you, you communicate with them, you talk to them, you make yourself comfortable in that environment”.

Support from locals. This subtheme had a 16% frequency. New international students received a lot of support from local students. Participant 1 noted that she had a room where international students would meet with local students for interaction. She said when she joined her university, “we had a room for international students, where we used to meet gather around there and communicate with the domestic students and you know, have fun, so they will feel a little bit less homesick”. Participant 3 stated that

during an icebreaker activity, she met a friend who helped her through the orientation phase and remained a friend even after orientation,

Then we do like icebreaker activity, so then we get to make our first friend who is also an international student. Yeah I think that also helped, but then after the orientation, though we're kind of just on our own after, and then I was lucky enough that I met a really good friend my freshman year.

In addition, Participant 6 had many friends raised in California who helped him adapt to the new culture either through provision of transport or linguistically. Participant 5 stated local students created opportunities for students to hang out, making connections easier.

Support from international office. The international students' office was a source of great support. Participant 3 stated that she was guided by the international office on how to get a driver's license. Participant 4 added that she had academic advisors from the international students' offices assist her when she had trouble with getting a new F-1 student visa. Participant 5 said that an international students' officer helped her with registration, with legal documents, and through introductions to clubs and activities on campus,

There were fantastic people, even to some felt like my academic advisor, she didn't teach me any class, but I think I learned a lot from her. Oh, my goodness, registration day, and activities are always made in the middle of the day, going to all the departments to get approvals when classes are full or speak to the dean made me go crazy and she helped me out.

Participant 6 also conveyed how helpful his international students' advisors were,

“Definitely, a bit of both helped me the advisor and local student. I would say our international coordinator was definitely helpful. We had like some good information during the orientations”. This subtheme had a 14% frequency percentage.

Benefits of Assimilation

The study participants’ responses to the research questions generated rich data regarding the benefits of adapting to the new cultural university experience. The four subthemes for the acculturation benefits are listed in Table 5 and described in detail below.

Table 5

Benefits of Assimilation Themes

| Themes | Ability to Communicate | Choice of Subjects | Self-Development/ Independence | Sharing Food |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Total | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Sources | | | | |
| Frequencies | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Percentage | 36% | 9% | 45% | 9% |
| Frequency | | | | |

Ability to communicate. Through interaction with local students and participating in campus social activities, new students learned how to communicate. Communication helped students air their grievances and get their issues resolved. The

number of participant students who communicated this subtheme led to a 36% frequency percentage for the subtheme. Participant 5 offered one of her experiences,

I was facing a situation with one of my professors, so one the Deans, asked me like “you know, are you facing any problem with your professor?” And I just opened up and said, “Okay, this is what I’m facing”. It was hard for an international student to like, you know, communicate with faculties out here. The dean offering to help me is new for me.

Choice of subjects. New students were assisted in the choice of subjects. Being in a new system, international students did not know how to choose subjects. Professors and international students’ officers guided them through the choice and registration phases. Participant 5 said,

My university helped me a lot with learning what I really like to do, um, because you know how it is when you start your college, you do not understand what you really want, and you just pick a random major like you think you like, and then like you just keep switching. But the university was very flexible with that; they helped me understand like “Oh, you can try them, while being on track with your career”.

Self-development and independence. Through adaption to a new culture and environment, students individually grew. Participant 2 stated that through interactions, students gained new knowledge about where to go shopping for food, how to open a bank account, how to pay bills, and visiting new places. Participant 2 added that he learned about the cultures of different countries when he joined a group that participated in extracurricular activities,

One studying here gets to growing by self-development. I think, to the fact that we have to adapt, is also make us feel, we need to grow to be accepted, right?

We can't just say "no, this is my way", and then we learn because we have to live here, so as much as we can learn, we accept the different culture in US, it helps us as an individual person to grow.

Participant 5 became independent because she was away from her parents; she learned how to make decisions. Participant 5 stated, "It was very helpful, like I actually get to explore my options a lot. I went from math major to economic, and then I declare business finance". Moreover, Participant 6 was able to pursue both education and music careers.

Sharing food. Participant 4 stated that she sampled and appreciated food from different cultures. During holidays such as Thanksgiving, students and instructors shared food during campus activities. Participant 4 remarked,

In a Thanksgiving lunch, used to like, you know, share a lots sorts of food with the deans and all that staff. So, I think, you know, I never thought like, you know, like see of course is a Dean; okay he's two levels or three above me. I will level up the new so like you know setting with them.

Barriers

Participants detailed six challenges they experienced when adapting to the new cultural experience in a southern California university. Table 6 lists these six subthemes under the major theme of barriers.

Table 6

Barriers Themes

| Themes | Transport. | Comm. Patterns | Appropriate Food | Inadequate Resources | Isolation from Classmates | Prejudice from Stereotype |
|-------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Total | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Sources | | | | | | |
| Frequency | 7 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Percentage | 29% | 21% | 8% | 17% | 8% | 17% |
| Frequency | | | | | | |

Accommodation and transportation. The most frequently mentioned challenge participants had was transportation (29% frequency). This was primarily because southern California lacks a robust transportation system. Students mentioned that in California, a car is needed to get around, but they needed driver’s licenses and cars were very expensive for them. According to Participants 1 and 6, students were forced to find local students to pay them as their means of transport. Participant 5 said she had to make friends with locals to go shopping for food because no stores were near the campus. Participant 5 expressed, “you feel bad using them to get food, so you offer to pay for gas; this is where we need help”. Participant 1 related how she lost transportation for activities, which hindered her ability to socialize and explore California,

We were literally lost funding for our own trips in the international student program, like the students will have to pay 100% of the trips, as well as transport.

So, we will do Uber to universal, or like we were literally just go to every single department, asking them “can we borrow your way? Can we borrow your vehicle?”

On the other hand, Participant 2 had issues with the host family. The host family started charging him, which was not part of the agreement. Also, he was given food he was not used to. The host family even dictated the kind of friends the participant should have. Participant 2 was finally kicked out of the residence,

It was a family that I stayed with for only one month until they kick me out, because I told off the mother for wanting me to only have Japanese friends. I was like, “I’m not here just to have a Japanese friend from the campus because I’m here to learn English until I pass my tests”. Transportation is easier when you are on campus, but I moved out to experience living off campus.

Communication patterns. New international students experienced challenges in communication. Participant 3 had issues with her accent; she pronounced some words differently. People had challenges understanding what Participant 3 said, “I think it is probably my accent, because I think sometimes, like especially some words that I say it differently than other people. And the accent, I have a heavy accent, and people do not really understand me”. Participant 4 had challenges understanding what Americans were saying,

But one thing that I think was a bit surprising to me was during the presentation, even though they give us the printed out of what has been said, for I think when they are presenting, maybe they kind of forgot that some of us might not be able to catch up with the language, even though we speak English.

Participant 5 also expressed difficulties communicating with the local people.

Difficulties finding “appropriate” food. Due to cultural differences, it was challenging for new international students to find food they were used to at home. Participant 2 noted that some students were being charged by their host families for food. This was not part of Participant 2’s accommodation agreement,

The food is really one of the big differences that we can't find what we want to eat, versus like if we eat this year don't feel good, because our body is not, you know, made to digest those kind of things, so that was probably the third struggle.

Inadequate resources. New international students were not given as many resources as their local counterparts. Participant 1 highlighted that some students reported that their funding was being cut off. Students had to fund any activity they were engaged in. In addition, the facility international students used to meet in was allocated to other groups. Participant 1 elaborated,

Because living so far away, homesickness or something we cannot avoid, but when I came to the university within like a month and a half, our international room was taken away and given to some other person, some other group of students, and slowly our funding was cut off.

Isolation from classmates. New students experienced challenges making friends. Participant 2 would plan to hang out with local students, but the domestic students would cancel at the last minute,

If I hang out with the girlfriends of like me, and I’m the only one international student, and then the rest of them are American, and then they make a promise of

going out, like oh yeah maybe we can meet this weekend, and then you built yourself up to go out, I'm like "oh yes; I'm so excited". Then the day to go out, they flake off, like "no, I am sorry" and say "I am tired. I can't make it". Just it breaks your hopes up.

Participant 6 expressed difficulty creating friendships because White girls were obsessed with boys,

the difficulty that I had was trying to find friends with, a, with a lot of girls.

Many were not into their cultural values. Some were so mean to me when they learned I was from Turkey, they stopped speaking to me or would not invite me. I hate to not be like, it revealed something to me that they were just like basic with no culture, and like White girls like just obsessed with boys.

Prejudice and stereotyping. New international students experienced prejudices and stereotyping. Participant 3 mentioned that because she was from China, people expected her to like Chinese things such as food. Participant 3 did not love the Chinese lifestyle. Participant 3 explained,

Like just because I'm from China, like people kind of assume that I like everything about China, that they assume I like Chinese food, and like they assume I'm pretty traditional and I should have a shy personality, because most Chinese are shy.

Participant 6 reported experiencing discrimination from people of a particular ethnicity. Participant 6 also could not get a job because he was not an American student. In addition, when he tried to make friends and people discovered where he was from, the people did not meet him again. Participant 6 declared,

When you're trying to make friends, and it'd be interesting like when they would find out like where I'm from. And then suddenly, like I would not hear from them again, or like it'd be a friend of a friend and I'd want to hang out with them, and they'd be like "sorry," like they don't want to see you just because, like I'm from certain place.

Improvement Strategies for the University

Table 7 shows the five subthemes aimed at strategically addressing solutions to the challenges international students experience to adapt to the new culture at southern California universities.

Table 7

Improvement Strategies for the University

| Themes | Education Awareness | Hosting Events | Provide Transport | International Community | Survey/ Regular Check- up |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Total | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Sources | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Percentage | | | | | |
| Frequency | 50% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 31% |

Education and awareness. The university should have educated new international students on what to expect in America. It should have advised students

where to live and the dangerous areas to avoid. This kind of education received the most participant mentions (50% frequency). In addition, it is important for the university to make sure that students are safe and to regularly check up on the students. This subtheme was the second highest at 31% frequency. The study participants voiced their concerns and the need to be safe here in the US, especially when they live off campus. Participant 2 expressed the importance of safety, “Students are not paying all that money; is the parents are paying all that money. So, it gives really ensuring for the students and their family that they're in a really secure, safe place”. Participant 5 discussed the importance of universities’ creating awareness,

I am from Cambodia, and like I don't think anyone heard of this private university. And you know, so I think just to get more international students on campus, I'll be trade, and like they should also host just a little more activities that we could join to advertise that elders’ international students on campus is not just.

Hosting events during the day. Most of the events for new students were held at night, and most of the new students were not staying on campus. Therefore, the university should have organized the events during the day. Participant 3 said,

I follow like the clubs and events on campus in general, though, if they can host those events like in the afternoon or in the morning, that is better because I realized most of the activities are hosted and night. Way after 10pm, and then people who are living off-campus have a hard time to going to chat with at that time because it's so late.

Provision of transport services. Most students did not have enough money for transportation or to buy a car, and even those who had money to buy a car had challenges

getting a driver's license. Also, there were no dedicated lanes for bicycles. The university should have provided a public means of transportation for its students.

Participant 2 said,

The campus to provide a community bus for students, so they do not really have to worry about if they have to buy a car. Bicycle is also is somewhat dangerous, because their streets are not made for it unless you live in separate, one part of San Francisco.

Stronger international community. The university should have advocated for or ensured that international students had a strong community. This would have helped students solve some of the challenges they were facing. Participant 6 expressed,

I feel kind of disconnected from like the international community. I wish there was a way that it would be like a stronger community because that way, we could help each other navigate. Like a similar to this culture, but I feel like we've kind of been dispersed and figuring it out on our own.

Survey and regular checkups. Participants said that the university should conduct periodic surveys and checkups to find out how new international students were doing. Participant 2 suggested that the university should have come up with a policy for making sure that instructors reached out to students and always knew about their welfare. According to Participant 4, students should be surveyed to find out about the challenges they are facing and suggestions on how to make adaptation easier,

then, maybe at the end of the program, if they can be giving us like a survey, like we're doing right now, like to fill out the survey. How this is serious, work on suggest, what are we advise, what are we taking away, stuff like that.

Participant 5 added, “increase the interaction with the international students, so like I give an example. There should be like a biweekly session like with international student, like a Zoom on an average event”.

Participants’ Adaptation Strategies

The data from this research study generated seven subthemes regarding acculturation strategies for students leaving their home countries to study in a university in America. The details for each subtheme are shown in Table 8 and detailed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Table 8

Study Participants’ Adaptation Strategies

| Themes | Goal Setting | Good Relation-ship | Learn English | Own Identify | Open-mind | Campus Activities | Time Management |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Total | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Sources | | | | | | | |
| Frequency | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Percentage | 25 % | 6 % | 6% | 6% | 31% | 18% | 6% |
| Frequency | | | | | | | |

Goal setting. Participants would advise prospective students coming to study in the US, especially California, to have a plan of what they want to achieve. Goal setting was the second most common subtheme, at 25%. International students have to achieve their education with the constraints of a visa and limited economic resources. Participant 2 advised students to have a timeline of goals they wanted to attain,

The time of the goal that you want to reach, and if you are okay with it, he is not going to say anything about it. But if you want to get there sooner than later, you need to be focused on what you want to do, and you can have fun here and there, but not all the time, and it's hard.

Participant 3 advised students to plan to register ahead of time so that they do not miss classes and can find a class in the subject they need. They should have a plan for their entire stay at the university for four or five years. Participant 3 explained,

I think I would say, like talk to your advisor on events and then like do a four-year plan and then see what classes you need to take every semester, and pay attention to the enrollment time of classes and dates to take specific subject classes and stuff like that.

Good relationships with instructors. Prospective students should have good relationships with their instructors. Students should meet professors before registering for subjects so that they can get advice and opinions on what to expect. Participant 4 recommended,

I think the first thing is to have questions when you register for a class. If you could go meet the professor before the start date of class, this would be your best choice. If I had, this would help me understanding when a course is offered in the semester in school, and like what choices I could have taken in classes.

Learn English. Since everything in America is done in English, it is the duty of international students to make sure that they learn how to communicate in English.

Participant 1 stated, "If you are not fluent in English, learn it fast, because that will help your English is an international language, and we have good courses in almost all

university, is called ESL courses”.

Not lose own identity. Participants advised students who are interested in joining an American university not to lose their cultural values and identity while in America. Participant 6 said it was good to explore and experience new cultures, but he emphasized maintaining their identity, “Like not losing a sense of your own identity while you are trying to adapt to this new culture. Like keeping parts of yourself, while you're like exploring this newfound freedom”.

Open-mindedness. Prospective students should be open to experiencing different cultures. According to participants, new students expect food to be the same in America as in their home countries. However, students should be open to trying foods from other cultures. Students should also be open to meeting and socializing with new people. Participant 3 stated, “I think they open-minded. That's really important because, like, I found a lot of stuff on, you like you make new friends, you try new foods”. Participant 5 added, “the only advice I would give them is like be open to talk to people. You should be very open. You should like, you know, make friends on yourself”.

Participation in campus activities. Participants advised students wishing to study in America to participate in campus activities and join clubs. Participation in activities will make adaptation easier and the experience enjoyable. Also, those activities will help them improve their social skills, communicate, and make new friends.

Participant 1 stated,

The first advice would be to enjoy the place you are in, and not just study. Life gets really boring, if you are like into the books all the time because you're an international student. You could have studied at home as well, right? So that

would be my first advice: to roam around; experience the culture; experience the place; make friends.

Participant 5 recommended,

Like you know, to meet people, you need join those activities, you should interact with more people so that is a great like, you know, seeing people you know on campus, and if you do not meet them in the clubs, you will not talk to them, once you make friends they also get to know that you know what exactly is happening.

Proper time management. Due to the social life on campus, students should plan on how they spend their time. Bad time decisions can cause failure in both personal and educational life. Participant 2 elaborated,

I will say to try not to waste any time during your stay, but the same time, they have to be smart of their decisions of what they want to do and how they're going to do it. No plan sometimes plays out well, but at the same time, you want to be smart to make a plan.

In this study, international students' experiences were examined through qualitative interviews. The findings revealed that international students deal with communication, transportation, academic, social isolation, and cultural adjustment challenges. Culturally, they need to confront the different ways of thinking and acting in the US. To overcome these challenges, students have adopted resources that are mainly derived from the local students, university advisors, and professors. Having a better understanding of international students' support systems and challenges can help university faculty and staff members recognize students' needs. International students can be offered effective campus support resources, services, and social activities.

Universities in southern California and in the US at large can be prepared to meet students' needs, not only academically and socially but also culturally.

Summary

In Chapter IV, the findings for this phenomenological research study exploring international students' ability to adapt to a new cultural experience and their barriers to successfully adapting to a new cultural experience were presented. The six study participants were asked the same semi-structured interview questions to discover their lived experiences when attending a southern California university. The researcher found commonalities in the study participants' subthemes of experiences with support and challenges. Research Question 1 yielded eight major findings, and Research Question 2 yielded four. Together, the two research questions generated six subthemes and 141 frequencies. Chapter V contains a summary of the research study, a list of major findings and unexpected findings, several implications for action, numerous recommendations for

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The summary of this study is presented in Chapter V, which includes a review of the purpose statement, methodology, sample and population, research questions, and data collection and analysis. Themes and findings were drawn from the coding of the semi-structured interviews. This chapter discusses the findings from the coding and the theoretical frameworks that anchored this study. Future research studies will be recommended that might address the limitations of the present study. Final remarks and reflections will constitute the conclusion of this chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore international students' perceptions regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers they encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a Southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new cultural experience?
2. What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a Southern California university regarding the types of barriers encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience?

Methodology

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described the qualitative research design ethnography as a description and interpretation of a culture of a shared group or a system where the focus is on learned patterns of actions, languages, belief, rituals, and ways of life (p. 23). The ethnography research designs differ from the phenomenology research design in that it involves prolonged field work involving observation of a shared group or activity in which group artifacts are collected and casual interviews are conducted with participants about their daily lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Ethnography was considered an improper design for this study because it does not allow for in-depth investigation into the study's phenomenon.

Qualitative research was the methodology used for this study because it was the approach best suited to gain a better understanding of international students' collegial life through firsthand interviews regarding their experiences. Patton (2012) described an interview as a series of open-ended questions that generate thorough answers regarding people's experiences and perspectives about a topic. The interpretations of the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences are the essence of qualitative inquiry. A qualitative research methodology was an appropriate way of exploring international students' perceptions regarding (a) support from southern California universities to help them adapt to a new culture experience and (b) barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience.

As outlined by Stake (2010), a qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation. The perceptions of six international students studying in

a southern California university were captured through interviews that produced the data analyzed in this study. The instrument of the semi-structured interview questions was created with the assistance of a qualitative expert. The study has two research questions that were aligned with seven interview questions and four probing questions. Emails were sent to the international students requesting their participation. The emails included the purpose of the study, the interview consent form, and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights. The interviews of the study participants were conducted and recorded on the online platform Zoom. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo to find minor and major themes to code the data. Inductive coding was used by the researcher to analyze the data. Chandra and Shang (2019) described inductive coding as a data analysis process whereby the researcher reads and interprets raw textual data to develop concepts, themes, or a process model through interpretations based on data (Chandra & Shang, 2019).

Population

The population for this study consisted of participants born in a foreign country studying in the US on a student F-1 or J-1 visa. According to California State University's (2021) report, "An analysis of student visa data suggests that in 2019 as many as 1,159,798 international students came to the U.S. to study at American colleges and universities" (para. 5). Students were approved by a southern California university to attend an educational institution in the state. English did not have to be the student's first language, but all participants were required to be fluent in English to participate in the research study. The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2020)

revealed that for the fifth consecutive year, the United States hosted more than one million international students (1,075,496) during the 2019/2020 academic year.

Sample

In 2020, California hosted 227,191 international students, the largest percentage of international students (18.2%) of any U.S. state (The Student and Exchange Visitor Program [SEV], 2020). The California state university (CSU) system, one of the largest in the United States, enrolled its largest-ever student body for the fall 2020 term (CSU, 2020). The 23 campuses of the university collectively enrolled 485,549 students, surpassing the previous enrollment high of 484,297 in fall 2017 and more than 3,600 students greater than fall 2019 (481,929; CSU, 2020). USC estimates that from this diverse international pool, it was home to approximately 11,308 international students (CSU, 2021, para. 5).

Patton (2012) stated,

there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources. (p. 45)

In nonprobability convenience sampling, “respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability” (Creswell, 2014, p. 204). In this study, the researcher used purposeful convenience sampling to select the participants. The international students were enrolled in either a public or private southern California university for at least one full academic year. The professional networks of the researcher within southern California universities were used to request six participants for this study. In addition,

the researcher sought the assistance of the dean, advisors, and counselors of several universities' International Students Departments to screen potential participants to recommend for the study.

Patton (2012) stated, "the use of participants from diverse sources is a methodological strength of a qualitative study when the researcher has a broader interest than just a single source" (p. 151). International students enrolled in two separate southern California universities were recruited for the study. International student advisors provided the list of students' names and email addresses to request their participation in the research. Six students were recruited from the two participating universities in southern California. The sampling pool for the study resulted in four women and two men being interviewed. Participants of the study were interviewed by the researcher on the Zoom platform.

According to Shuttleworth (2008), researchers need to generalize and try to select a sample group that is representative of the whole population (p. 6). The emphasis of purposive sampling is not to generalize the sample to a wider population but rather to study information that is rich and illuminates the topic being examined (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the sample of international students selected to participate in the study was chosen according to the aforementioned criteria. Purposeful sampling was utilized in this study because it allows the researcher to select the characteristics of the participants to be included in the study.

The sample size of six provided the opportunity to collect in-depth data to reach significant conclusions. Regarding this, Patton (2012) asserted, "Determining your final sample size is a matter of intellectual judgment based on the logic of making meaningful

comparisons, developing and testing your explanations” (p. 311). In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argued that the richness of the information gathered matters more than the number of participants in the study. The purposeful sample of six students was selected based on the following criteria: (1) they must be a citizen of a foreign country, (2) they must currently be studying at a four-year university in the US, and (3) they must have a student F-1 or a J-1 visa.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the logic of sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases (p. 328). Participant demographics were not variables of interest when recruiting students for this research but have been provided for use in further research studies.

Table 9

Study Participant Criteria

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Citizen of a foreign country | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Issued a F-1 or J-1 Visa to Study in the USA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Studied at a four-year university | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Attended a southern California university | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Demographic Data

Six international students who selected the US as their destination to study abroad for a degree program were the participants in this study. Each of the international students attended a university in southern California. Participants had been studying in the US for at least one year at a university. English did not have to be the student’s first

language, but all participants needed to be fluent in English to participate in the research study. Confidentiality of the demographic information for the students who participated in the one-on-one interviews was maintained by assigning numbers to each of them.

Table 2 illustrates further demographic data for the study participants.

Table 2

Demographic Data of Study Participants

| No. | Gender of Participant | Participant's Home Country | University Attended | Participant's Year |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | F | Turkey | University 1 | Junior |
| 2 | M | Vietnam/Cambodia | University 1 | Sophomore |
| 3 | F | Japan | University 1 | Senior |
| 4 | F | Nigeria | University 2 | Senior |
| 5 | F | China | University 2 | Sophomore |
| 6 | M | India | University 2 | Senior |

The demographic data table aligns with the criteria for the participants of this research study. Participants of the study were citizens of a foreign country studying in the US on a student F-1 or J-1 visa. As part of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), all schools are required to submit and regularly update student information in a central database that can be accessed by the government; students who do not appear or who stop attending classes can have their visas revoked and face deportation. In the 2019-20 school year, one in three international students studied in California, New York, or Texas.

Major Findings

The US is one of the most desirable destinations for international students seeking to study abroad at a higher educational institution. Universities in the US have been actively recruiting international students to supplement a deficit in revenues threatened by lower endowment proceeds and governmental funding. International students' substantial tuition revenue to universities stems from the fact that most of them pay full tuition without financial aid to many higher education institutions. The U.S. economy also benefits by international students procuring housing, utilizing transportation services, and purchasing food and clothing. But how are these students faring once they arrive in the US with adapting to the new cultural experience at a university? The purpose of this study was to explore international students' lived experiences with adapting to the new culture and barriers to adapting to the new culture experiences once they enrolled in a southern California university. Research has concluded that adapting to the new culture in the US is crucial to international students' being successful in their education and career aspirations. A literature review was conducted in which several theories were found to explore international students' lived experiences. Research questions were developed to facilitate a greater understanding of international students' perceptions of support received and barriers to adapting to a new culture experience. The below section is dedicated to the findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, and the implications for action. The final section includes the limitations of the present study, and future research studies are suggested.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was, "What are the lived experiences of international

students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new cultural experience?”

Support lived experiences.

Major finding 1: campus activities and cultural events. Participants stated that they were involved in campus and cultural activities. Through trips and interaction with people in campus events, Participant 1 said that her English usage greatly improved. Participant 2 noted that there were cultural events organized on campus that enabled him to understand cultural differences and also appreciate food from other cultures. Participant 3 stated that through Christian fellowship, she was able to travel and experience new places. Participant 6 joined music and sport groups that helped him adapt to U.S. life. Participant 1 elaborated on her experience,

I was interacting with because I was working as the student coordinator, and I was in the all the TRIPs and all where he was being planned by our office. So, I was interacting with a lot of people that helped me learn the language, like my English was good, I was I LDS 9% student but it polishes you right when you're conversing with other people, and like learning from them, and it also helped me.

Participant 2 also explained his experience,

And what they do, they make games, they talk about different culture, and based on that culture differences, they do little like events by providing food that is from their country and whatnot, so that kind of help to for students to adapt in because we learn as we learn.

Major finding 2: faculty support. The teaching staff assisted new international students in adapting to the American education system. Participant 3 said that instructors

were very supportive during lessons and also in exams. Participant 5 pointed out that the gap between instructors and students in India was so big that they could not have a relationship. However, in America, the gap was small, and professors were supportive and in touch with students. According to Participant 6, professors spared time to meet with students outside classroom hours. Participant 3 affirmed how helpful professors to her, “The teachers were being really nice to me to live, like she provided extra help and allow me to use my dictionary during exams, but I didn't really want that, because on what I know it's my second language”. Participant 5 explained her comments regarding the gap between students and instructors,

The gap between you and the Professor was too much; it was very hard for you to be in touch with the professor and get the understanding or get the solutions for your problem. I used to always see, like you know in us, like you know the strength of the classes very small. It's like 20 students, 25 students, and because of this, this is a very strong reason why you're able to get in touch with your professors.

Major finding 3: mentorship and buddy system. International students were paired with local students so that they could look after each other. Participant 1 stated that she shared an apartment with local students. Local students were supposed to take care of the international students. Participant 1 explained,

In our first semester, we were paired up like to internationals, so we had a housing system, like this is a specific thing like very specific to CSU. So, we have a housing system where we have an apartment that is shared by four students. It's a two bedroom apartment shared by four students. So, one bedroom would be a

pair of international students and other bedroom would be a pair of domestic students.

International students were also allocated mentors. Participant 2 reported that people volunteered to become mentors to new students. Participant 2 explained that there was a club for people interested in guiding international students,

The people who work in the offices were trying to gather to students with other mentors. From the school down whom voluntarily you know, wants to help the international student and they make the international student club, which is so you have international student and then the people who are interested in the international students.

Participant 5 stated that friends made sure that international students were able to communicate and interact with people around them. In addition, before going to America, prospective students were allocated a person in America through the buddy program to assist them in transitioning smoothly. Participant 5 elaborated, “She is to always make sure that you have to sit with someone else, so that you, you communicate with them, you talk to them, you make yourself comfortable in that environment”.

Major finding 4: support from colleagues. New international students received a lot of support from local students. Participant 1 noted that the university she attended had a room where international students would meet with local students for interaction. Participant 3 stated that during an icebreaker activity, she met a friend who helped through the orientation phase and remained a friend even after orientation. Participant 6 had many friends raised in California who helped him adapt to the new culture either

through provision of transportation or linguistically. Participant 1 stated local students created opportunities for students to hang out, making connections easier,

When I joined the university, we had a room for international students where we used to meet, gather around there, and communicate with the domestic students and you know, have fun, so they will feel a little bit less homesick.

Participant 3 shared how making a friend helped him,

Then we do like icebreaker activity, so then we get to make our first friend who is also an international student. Yeah I think that also helped, but then after the orientation, though, we're kind of just on our own after, and then I was lucky enough that I met a really good friend my freshman year.

Major finding 5: support from international office. The international students' office was of great support to the participants in this study. Participant 3 was guided by the international office on how to get a driver's license. Participant 4 added that she had academic advisors from the international students' offices. Participant 5 said that an international students' officer helped her in registration, with legal documents, and through introduction to clubs and activities on campus. Participant 5 expressed,

There were fantastic people even to some of like my academic advisor. I she didn't teach me any class, but I think I bought a lot, oh, my goodness, now just then that and he made in the middle of the day, ones are going crazy and she lives out.

Participant 6 also discussed how the international students' office supported him,

"Definitely, a bit of both I would say. Dakota or international coordinator was definitely helpful. We had like some orientations".

Benefits of assimilation.

Major finding 6: ability to communicate. Through interaction with local students and participating in campus social activities, new students learned how to communicate. Communication helped students air their grievances and have their issues handled.

Participant 5 stated,

I was facing a situation with one of my professors, so one of my Dean, asked me like, “you know, are you facing any problem with your professor?” And I just opened up and said, “Okay, this is what I’m facing”. It was hard for an international student to like you know, communicate with faculties out here.

Major finding 7: choice of subjects. New students were assisted in choosing their academic subjects. Being in a new system, international students did not know how to choose subjects to study. Professors and international students’ officers guided them through the choice and registration phases. Participant 5 shared her experience,

Chairman Ashley helped me a lot with learning what I really like to do, um, because you know how it is when you start your college, you do not understand what you really want, and you just pick a random major like you think you like, and then like you just keep switching. But Tammy was very flexible with that; they helped me understand like “Oh, you can try them, while being on track with your career”.

Major finding 8: self-development and independence. Through adaption to the new culture and environment, students individually grew. Participant 2 stated that through interactions, he gained new knowledge. The participant added that he learned about the cultures of different countries. Participant 5 became independent because she

was away from her parents; she learned how to make decisions. Participant 6 was able to pursue both education and a music career. Participant 2 explained his experience with personal growth,

One is a self-development. I think, to the fact that we have to adapt is also we need to grow to accept, right? We can't just say "no, this is my way", and that then we because we have to live here so as much as we accepted different culture in US, it helps us as an individual person to grow.

Participant 5 also conveyed her experience with growth, "It was very helpful, like I actually get to explore my options a lot. I went from math major to economic, and then I declare business finance".

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "What are the lived experiences of international students enrolled in a southern California university regarding the types of barriers encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience?"

Barriers experienced by new international students.

Major finding 1: accommodation and transportation. Participants reported that they had challenges in accessing accommodation and transportation services. According to Participants 1 and 6, students were forced to find and pay for their means of transport. On the other hand, Participant 2 had issues with the host family. The host family started charging him, which was not part of the agreement. Also, he was given food that he was not used to. The host family even dictated the kind of friends the participant should have. Participant 2 was finally kicked out of the residence,

it was a family that I stayed with for only one month until they kick me out is

because I told off the mother for saying that I was to not have a Japanese friend in from the campus because I'm here to learn English until I pass my top tests.

Participant 1 conveyed her experience with barriers,

We were literally funding our own trips, like the students will pay 100% of the TRIPS, as well as transport. So, we will do uber to universal or like we were literally just go to every single department, asking them, “can we borrow your way? Can we borrow your vehicle?”

Major finding 2: communication patterns. New international students experienced challenges in communication. Participant 3 had issues with her accent; she pronounced some words differently. People had challenges understanding what she said, “I think it is probably my accent, because I think sometimes like especially some words that I say it differently than other people, and the accent I have is heavy, and people do not really understand me”. Participant 5 said it was hard to communicate with the local people. In addition, Participant 4 had challenges understanding what Americans were saying,

But one thing that I think was a bit surprising to me was during the presentation, even though they give us the printed out of what has been said, for I think when they are presenting maybe they kind of forgot that some of us might not be able to catch up with the language, even though we speak English.

Major finding 3: difficulties in finding 'appropriate' food. Due to cultural differences, it was challenging for new international students to find food they were used to at home. Participant 2 noted that some students were being charged by their host families for food, which was not part of the accommodation agreement,

The food is really one of the big differences that we can't find what we want to eat versus like if we eat this year don't feel good, because our body is not you know made to digest those kind of things, so that was probably the third struggle.

Major finding 4: inadequate resources. New international students were not given as many resources as their local counterparts. Participant 1 highlighted that some students reported their funding being cut off. Students had to fund any activity they were engaged in. In addition, the facility international students used to meet in was allocated to other groups. Participant 1 elaborated,

The common thing that we shared was that we were not being granted as many resources as we deserve. Because living so far away, homesickness or something we cannot avoid, but when I came to the university within like a month and a half, our international room was taken away and given to some other person. Some other group of students and slowly our funding was cut off.

Unexpected Findings

After thematically analyzing the participants' answers to the research questions, several unexpected themes were repeated in the study. In addition, the information developed from these themes are new to the literature but were perceived as important by the international student participants. The participants' unexpected perceptions were worth further attention in this study. First, the study participants' perception prior to arriving to the US was that the university's population would be diverse. The perception was that a university in the US would have students of different races and international students from all over the world. The participants were shy in discussing the lack of diversity in the student population of the universities included in the research. However,

the topic was important to the participants' feelings of assimilation to the new university culture, because they did not want to be viewed as an outsider. Participants reported they expected not only diversity in the local students but also international students.

One of the two universities studied is located in the city of Orange, California. According to the United States Bureau 2020 census, the demographic data for the city of Orange is 60% Caucasian, 30% Hispanic, 8.2% Asian, and 1.7% African American. The student population of the university campus located in the city of Orange consists mainly of Caucasian and Asian students. The second university in the research study is in the city of Carson, California. The City Hall in Carson listed the demographic data as 39% Hispanic, 27% Asian, 23% Caucasian, and 21% African American. Prior to arriving to the US, the study participants interviewed in the second university had expectations of meeting students from different ethnicities. However, the participants described the local students as predominantly African American, Hispanic, and limited international students. On most campuses, there is only limited mingling of international students with domestic students, creating few opportunities for either group to gain cross-cultural experiences (Teekens, 2000). The six international students interviewed for this study perceived their campus would be diverse.

Secondly, an unexpected benefit to some international students was their attendance at a relatively small university in southern California. The participants reported that it was easier for them to adapt to the new cultural experience in the university due to the university's campus size. The research participants attributed their receiving personal attention from instructors to the university's smaller class sizes. The small size of the university's campus permitted the study participants to fraternize with

local students because they kept seeing the same people in the library, cafeteria, and outdoor surroundings. The environment of this university was compared to the participants' experience with educational institutions in their home countries.

International students' adaptation to the new cultural experience in a southern California university was aided by the campus size.

Third, several of the participants interviewed expressed their constant fear of losing their U.S. visas. One of the examples provided was that international students will not confront university staff members due to their fear of losing their F-1 or J-1 visa. One participant in the study expressed how international students are very afraid of getting into trouble while living at the dorm or living off campus because they could lose their immigration status. A local student told an international student that marijuana is legal; however, the study participant later learned of the university's no drug policy. Another international student conveyed how the person working at the International Student Services Department gave her the wrong information regarding the immigration documents needed for an international student to transfer from one college to another college. The student had to leave the US since she would have been deported for submitting the incorrect documentation. In addition, the student has been in the US for an additional year to finish her bachelor's degree due the time she lost returning home. Losing the opportunity to complete a higher education degree in the US, financial losses, and potential career setbacks are the major fears several participants communicated.

Conclusions

The focus of this research study was to explore international students' lived experiences with adapting to a new cultural experience and their barriers experienced

while enrolled at a university in southern California. Six international students' perceptions were captured in the semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher. After the qualitative data were collected, coding was conducted to capture the common themes of the international students' experiences adapting to a new culture. The study's key findings are explained below.

Conclusion 1. Support Experiences

Although Anyangwe (2012) argued that international students are very effective at building their own support groups, the findings of this study demonstrated that local students represented a great resource to participants' successful adaptation to the new cultural experience at a university. Local students' assistance with transportation to buy groceries and to attend off-campus activities were the most common support examples. Also, being able to socialize with local students who were in their same age group was crucial to the international students' assimilation efforts. In addition to support from local students, study participants were grateful for support offered by the university. Participants valued the activities the International Student Department coordinated because this provided opportunities to make friends. Furthermore, instructors' availability to the students outside of their office hours was of great support. Finally, international student advisors were seen as a great resource for assistance with more than just visa issues.

Conclusion 2. Expectations

Participants had various expectations regarding U.S. culture prior to arriving in the country, but not all of these expectations were met. Contrary to their expectations, participants experienced a lack of diversity on campus, and they expected to see more

international students from around the world. In addition, due to food being plentiful in the US, they expected to have home-grown food easily available and to try new food. Furthermore, they expected to meet local students and to experience new ventures. Once they arrived on campus, they experienced some happy surprises, such as having access to their instructors after class and during office hours. In addition, international students experienced liberty to select what degree programs they wanted to study, to change programs with ease, and to select any elective classes. Several participants mentioned that in their home country, they would study near their home. However, in the US, the value of living on campus created the environment to interact more with the local students in activities on campus and in the dorms. The dorm supervisors were viewed as another source of support while living on campus.

Conclusion 3. Barriers

Participants perceived living off campus as a valuable experience to help them adapt to the new culture; however, it posed certain challenges not experienced while living on campus. The international students experienced difficulty buying food if the supermarket was not close by. Moreover, the social activities held on campus became more difficult to attend, as did socializing with other local students. The largest barrier that impacted students' academic achievement was comprehending new concepts taught in the US. Four of the six participants' academic struggles centered around the American way of speaking English. Additional barriers participants mentioned included how to navigate the various departments, how to enroll in classes, how to select classes, and how to pay for classes. The educational systems in their home countries were less complex, but they did not allow as much autonomy as in the US.

Conclusion 4. Student Adaptation Strategies

Participants conveyed their understanding that adapting to U.S. culture begins with being open to communicate with local students and instructors. In addition, they understood the importance of communicating effectively in English with not only instructors for educational purposes, but also with friends for social purposes and with employers for professional purposes. Participants described how much more they had to study than the local students due to their lack of comprehension of the American way of speaking English. In addition, several participants were concerned about not being able to find a job after graduation due their accents. Also, participants mentioned wanting to speak English like the locals to understand the lectures in class and participate in classroom discussions. Ultimately, participants viewed mastering the American way of speaking English as an essential adaptation strategy that laid the foundation for all of their U.S. endeavors.

Conclusion 5. Improvement Strategies

The researcher concluded that the improvement strategies suggested by the participants for the universities can be effective because they were student-driven solutions. Participants described the benefits to establishing a plan to fulfill their academic and career goals. Participants declared that this kind of plan is crucial because finances and a student visa are necessary to attend a university in southern California. The suggestion to be open minded was intended to promote extending themselves to make friends and to ask a lot of questions to learn from others. In addition, participants mentioned resources from the university for services on campus. Participants provided examples of how they would ask other departments to donate funds for the international

students' activities. Farnsworth (2018) asserted building a campus community where international students are fully integrated into the learning process and social environment can benefit everyone. This helps create comradery between local students and international students.

Conclusion 6. Benefits of Assimilation

Participants perceived college life as beneficial to both their personal and academic growth. The universities' culture impacted their social lives by exposing them to new activities that included eating out, exploring new locations, and making new friends. The creation of friendships and social networks helps provide students with an identity in foreign surroundings (QS Quacquarelli Symonds, n.d., para. 2). During these social events is when international students can (a) feel a sense of belonging to the college life, (b) develop friendships, and (c) gain new perspectives of living in the US.

Implications for Action

After the data were coded and analyzed, the following areas emerged as implications for further action. The implications for action are designed to address the support areas international students identified to help them adapt to the new cultural experience in a southern California university.

Implication for Action 1: Formalized Strategic Support Plan

As reported in the qualitative data by the six international student participants, local students provided the most valuable support to their assimilation to the new cultural experience at a southern California university. Both universities in the research study were found to provide pertinent information to the participants during the International Student Orientation on topics that go beyond the services of registration, financial aid,

library resources, tutoring, and student activities. The study participants reported universities provided immigration information, health insurance plans, medical services, public safety, opening a bank account, and transportation nearby the university. Furthermore, campus activities, trips, and social clubs were provided during the initial orientation meetings for the international students. One of the universities in the research has a program through which local students could volunteer to be paired up with international students as a buddy to assist international students.

The second source of support the study participants reported was the advisors and counselors in the International Student Services Departments. International students residing on campus also perceived the residence dorm managers provided support by hosting educational events, coordinating social events in the dorms, resolving resident conflicts, and addressing housekeeping and emergency needs. Several participants mentioned the university system can be confusing because there are various departments for immigration issues, registering for classes, paying for tuition, and assistance programs for international students. Thus, the implication for action would be for universities in California to create a formalized strategic support plan.

International Student Services Departments across the state must coordinate a strategic international support plan based on insight from this study's findings.

The strategic plan objectives should address those support networks that were viewed as essential for the international students' adaptation to the new culture experiences: (1) building local friendships, and (2) legal advocates for international students.

A program establishing a better way to truly immerse students in a new culture would be the main objective of the activities and events. When it comes to truly experiencing life in another country, it is crucial to have native friends. International students who only socialize with other international students fail to fully adapt to a new cultural experience. Establishing a clubhouse for local students and international students on campus would contribute to building camaraderie. Clubs are inherently social. The host universities would coordinate ventures off campus for international students and local students to experience an entirely different community.

Implication for Action 2: Student Legal Affairs Department

Moreover, differences in the legal system from the participants' home countries to that of the United States can sometimes make it very difficult for international students to understand how to navigate the U.S. immigration system. Several participants expressed major concerns regarding (a) having knowledgeable personnel to assist them or (b) the length of time it took to obtain a response to an immigration question at their educational institution. The international student clubs will host webinar events on immigration issues to keep the students up to date on changes to visas. Referral services to attorneys who specialize in international organizations that lobby for various issues on behalf of currently enrolled and incoming international students would greatly benefit the students.

Implication for Action 3: Diversity and Inclusion Student Training

Given the current focus on international student recruitment by universities due to the financial and diversity benefits to the educational institutions, increasing diversity education is imperative. International students arrive to the US with perceptions that can be stereotypes of Americans. Often these perceptions remain unexamined, even as international students (a) seek to be assigned work studies in the university and (b) are

highly recruited for STEM employment opportunities. Diversity and inclusion training should be required not just for faculty but also for university students. The training is necessary for students to become more aware of unconscious bias, miscommunication on campuses, and other barriers to diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, diversity training can motivate positive behaviors essential for creating and maintaining a respectful campus.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a result of the data collected and analyzed from this study, several recommendations for further research are suggested.

Recommendation 1

Conduct a mixed methodology study of the international students' perceptions regarding the types of support received to adapt to a new cultural experience and the barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

During the process of coding the six international students' responses to the research questions, major findings and conclusions were drawn from the data. The themes and rich data from this study would be utilized to create a Likert scale survey to explore whether the support systems in the universities and the barriers discussed in the interviews to adapt to a new culture experience are widely held by other international students. McLeod (2019) described the advantages of the Likert scale as allowing for degrees of opinion; measuring statements of agreement; and measuring other variations such as frequency, quality, importance, and likelihood, etc. It would be interesting to ascertain whether there is a correlation between the analysis of this study and that of

those international students who take the survey. The major findings of the mixed-method study could be used to compare to a larger international student population.

Recommendation 2

Conduct a qualitative study to explore the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on international students regarding the support to adapt to the new cultural experience and the barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a southern California university.

The COVID-19 pandemic created other challenges that have impacted numerous international students globally. In 2020, countries closed their borders and educational institutions closed, forcing large numbers of students to return home, and keeping other students stuck in foreign countries. Student visas were not being issued, and U.S. educational instruction changed to being conducted on online platforms. It is recommended that further study be conducted on this phenomenon to determine whether universities in southern California provided support systems for international students to adapt to the new culture experience created during the pandemic.

Recommendation 3

A qualitative research study of the best practices developed by higher education institutions to address international students' challenges regarding their education, cultural adaptation, living arrangements, procuring food, transportation, medical insurance, and immigration issues should be conducted. The data collected in the qualitative study would be compared to a quantitative survey created with data collected in the study. The research would explore whether the results of the qualitative study are applicable to a larger population. The study can be used to add to the literature review of

international students' supports. Policy makers can create meaningful programs to address international students' support regarding education, acculturation, socializing, finances, and career goals. In addition, the data will assist educational institutions with ensuring their current strategies are designed to address these pressing issues that are vital to advancing international students' education in the US.

Recommendation 4

Participants of this research study came from countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia. A study should be conducted to compare the lived experiences of students studying in the US from other countries with the lived experiences of the students in the present study. The focus of the study would be to explore the barriers international students face while attending a southern California university. By comparing international students from different countries, universities can obtain rich data regarding how students from each country perceive college life in the US. Universities can use the information to be strategic in creating policies, events, programs, and activities to address the students' acculturation needs and to mitigate issues with adapting to the new cultural experience.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The study participants' answers to the semi-structured interview questions provided the rich data for this study. International students who participated in the research study had a positive attitude regarding the support systems in place in the southern California universities despite any challenges they had experienced. First, participants described the international student orientation sessions as the initial source of support to them when they enrolled in the university. Second, international student advisors and instructors were equally credited with helping the participants adapt to the

new cultural experiences in the university but for different reasons. International student advisors were very good resources for information on visas, the university system, and social events. The professors' office hours and availability to discuss issues after class were unexpected areas of support. Third, participants reported having local students as friends as their most important source of support when adapting to the new cultural experience in a southern California university. That is why the participants wanted more social events to be conducted, so they could interact with the local students. Participants made the following recommendations to international students who are thinking about coming to the US to study: attend many activities, talk to everyone at the events, and make friends with both local and other international students. Participants provided examples of how local friends assisted with improving their language skills, getting food and lodging, and most importantly socializing. In addition, having local friends can assist with the loneliness of being an international student in a new culture and university.

One of the theoretical frameworks of this study, the social reproduction of class privileges, addresses how the adaptation to a new culture impacts the academic success of an international student. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that schools perpetuate the dominant culture. As a result, it is much more likely for students who did not grow up in the dominant culture to fail in school than for students who did grow up in the dominant culture. Participants in this research study expressed how their adaptation to the way Americans communicate in English impacted their successful academic achievement. The participants' primary academic challenges involved comprehending how English is spoken in the US. Participants also mentioned that they knew English but had difficulty with implementing a theory, because this was a new concept of learning.

International students described that their learning style back home was to memorize theories for examinations. The students also addressed the personal challenges they experienced with issues such as access to their native food, access to transportation, and learning U.S. social customs. In conclusion, the study participants managed their challenges and utilized all the support offered by local friends and university staff members to succeed in accomplishing their academic goals while studying in a southern California university.

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Appendix A

Synthesis Matrix

| Source | Theor y. Frame work | Hist. Content | Global Perspect. Of Int'l Ed. | The US And Int'l Ed. | Interest In US as Study Abroad Destin. | Recruit. Of Int'l Students | Accul- turation | Higher Ed. For Int'l Students In CA | Con c. |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------|
| Alghhamdi & Otte (2016) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Alloh, Tait, & Taylor (2018) | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Altbach & Knight (2007) | | X | | | | | | | |
| Altun (2017) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Alyahayan & Dustegor (2020) | | | | | | | | | X |
| Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor (2002) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Appadurai (1996) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Arrowsmith & Mandla (2017) | | | | X | | | | | |
| Badur (2003) | | | | X | X | | | | |
| Bergman (2005) | | X | | | | | | | |
| Bian (2017) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Berry & Sam (2010) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Bista (2016) | | | X | | | | X | | |
| Bista (2018) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Bista (2019) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Bista & Gaulee (2017) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Bista, Sharma, & Gaulee (2018) | | | X | | | | X | | |
| Boado, Hu, & Soysal (2017) | | | | | | | X | | |

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|------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Bourdieu (1977) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Bourdieu (1984) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Bourdieu (1986) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Brown & Jones (2011) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Bryla (2018) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Caldwell & Ssekasi (2016) | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Cardwell (2020) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Chen (2017) | | X | | | | | | | X |
| Cole (2017) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Collier & Morgan (2008) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Cross & Cummings (2004) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cerviño (2006) | | X | | | | | | | |
| de Wit & Leask (2015) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Duerdan et al. (2018) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Flores-Yeffal (2013) | X | | | | | | | | |
| French-Sloan (2015) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Garcia & Villarreal (2004) | | X | | | | | X | | |
| Geary (2016) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Harnish, Bridges, & Sillman (2012) | | | | | | X | | X | |
| Hayes & Lin (1994) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Hemsley-Brown (2012) | | X | | | | | | | |
| Heyn (2013) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Hoffa & Pearson (1997) | | X | | | | | | | |

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|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Horne, Lin, Anson, & Jacobson (2018) | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Horta (2009) | | X | | | | | | | |
| Hsuai (2016) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Hu (2018) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Huang et al. (2014) | | | | | | | X | | |
| IIE (2013) | | | | X | | | | | |
| IIE Open Door Report (2014) | | | | X | | | | | |
| James-MacEachern (2018) | | | | | | X | | | |
| Jones (2017) | | | X | | | | X | | |
| Kearney & Lincoln (2017) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Kelly & Moogan (2012) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Le & LaCost (2017) | | | | | | | | X | X |
| Lee & Rice (2007) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Li, Wang, Liu, Xu, & Cui (2018) | | | | | | | | | X |
| Li & Zizzi (2018) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Lin (2000) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Loury (1977) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Marginson (2013) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett (2010) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Marshall (2018) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Massey (1987) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Massey & Espinosa (1997) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Massey & Singer (1998) | | X | | | | | | | |

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|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Narayan & Cassidy (2001) | X | X | | | | | | | |
| Onk & Joseph (2017) | | X | | | | X | | | |
| Ozturgut (2013) | | X | | | | | | | |
| Park (2016) | | | | | | | | | X |
| Perry (2016) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Ruiz & Krogstad (2017) | | | X | | | | | | |
| Ruthkosky & Castano (2007) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Safipour, Wenneberg, & Hadziabdic (2017) | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Shan, Hussain, & Raza-Sargani (2020) | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Simm & Marvell (2015) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Smiljanic (2017) | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Sullivan (2002) | X | | | | | | | | |
| Swathi, Mark, Kara, & Ankita (2017) | | | | | | | | | X |
| Tan (2016a) | | | | | | | X | X | |
| Tan (2016b) | | | | | | | X | X | |
| Ugwu & Trache (2017) | | | X | | | | | | |
| U.S. Dept. of State (2014) | | | | | | | X | | |
| U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security (2014) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Wang & Zhang (2020) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Witherell & Clayton (2004) | | | X | X | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| Young & Schartner (2017) | | | | | | | X | | |
| Zhang & Zhou (2010) | | | | | | | X | | |

Appendix B

Informed Consent

INFORMATION ABOUT: The lived experiences of international students’ perception regarding the types of support received and barriers to adapt to a new cultural experience.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Jeanette Ayala, SPHR, M.S, MBA

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jeanette Ayala, a doctoral candidate at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of international students’ perception regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a Southern California university.

The interview(s) will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be conducted in a one-on-one virtual interview setting using Zoom.

I understand that:

- a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.
- b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher. The audio recordings will be used to capture the

interview dialogue as a text document and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted, and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study, all recordings will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.

c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding servant leadership and the impact it has on establishing a culture of high achievement. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about this study in which I participated. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at jayala@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at (562) 607-5838 or Dr. Doug DeVore (Committee Chairperson) at ddevore@brandman.edu

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study, and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed, and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the

Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date



BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

My name is Jeanette Ayala and I am a Regional Human Resources Manager. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate studying Organizational Leadership at Brandman University. I am conducting research to explore the lived experiences of international students' perception regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and the barriers to their successful adaptation. to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a Southern California university.

I am conducting six interviews with international students enrolled in a 4 year degree program in Southern California like yourself. During the interviews, participants will be able to provide an understanding into international student's experiences to adapt to a new culture and the factors that cause barriers. The participants will be asked the same questions during the interview to draw commonalities on experiences.

Informed Consent

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All data will be reported without references to any individual (s) or any institutions(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas. Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent. Also, I will be taking observational notes. Do you have any questions before we begin? Thank you for agreeing to meet me today, let's get started with the interview.

International Students Lived Experiences Regarding the Support to Adapt to a New Culture

Frechette et al (2020) supports the idea that in order to uncover lived experience, the interviewer is called to a committed listening for more than words, underlying beliefs, interpretations, and a desire to unearth what people care about (pg. 7). Kelly & Moogan (2012) emphasize international students must adapt to their new higher education system to be able to succeed (pg. 24). Yet many higher education institutions typically rely on foreign students themselves to adapt to their new higher education environments (Kelly & Moogan, para. 1)

Q1- What expectations did you have regarding the new cultural values you would experience once attending a university in the United States?

Probe: Describe what cultural differences you have experienced while enrolled in the university compared to your expectations before attending your university?

Q2 - Please describe the experiences you encountered during your first year of attendance that supported you to adapt to this new cultural experience.

Probe: Where some of these encountered experiences more important than others in helping you successfully adapt to the new cultural experience.

Probe: Did you perceive your instructors or International University's Student Office supportive to your cultural adaptation? Please provide an example if applicable.

Q3 - How has your experience with assimilation to the college life been beneficial to you and your education?

Barriers to Adapt to a New Culture

The support that international students appear to obtain from people of the host country has been reported to be infrequent and superficial, consisting mainly of information such as housing accommodation and directions (Chavajay, 2013).

Q1 - Please describe some of the barriers you have experienced to the new university culture in the United States.

Probe: How did these barriers impact your academic achievement? How about the

impact on your social life at the university? Please provide an example if applicable.

Q2 - Is there something the university could have done to better prepare international students to assimilate to the new culture?

Q3 - What advice would you give to a new international student preparing to come to the United States to attend a university regarding adapting to this new life experience ?

Q 4 - Is there anything else you want to share that I have not asked you in this interview ?

Appendix E

Alignment of Interview Questions to the Study’s Research Questions

Purpose: This phenomenological study will explore the lived experiences of international students’ perception regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience while enrolled in a Southern California university.

| Research question | Corresponding interview questions |
|--|--|
| <p>RQ 1: What are lived experiences of international students enrolled in a Southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new cultural experience?</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What expectations did you have regarding the new cultural values you would experience once attending a university in the United States? Probe: Describe what cultural differences you have experienced while enrolled in the university compared to your expectations before attending your university? 2. Please describe the experiences you encountered during your first year of attendance that supported you to adapt to this new cultural experience. Probe: Where some of these encountered experiences more important than others in helping you successfully adapt to the new cultural experience. Probe: Did you perceive your instructors or International University’s Student Office supportive to your cultural adaptation? Please provide an example if applicable. 3. How has your experience with assimilation to the college life been beneficial to you and your education? |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>RQ 2: What are lived experiences of international students enrolled in a Southern California university regarding the types of barriers encountered to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience?</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please describe some of the barriers you have experienced to the new university culture in the United States. Probe: How did these barriers impact your academic achievement? How about the impact on your social life at the university? Please provide an example if applicable. 2. Is there something the university could have done to better prepare international students to assimilate to the new culture? 3. What advice would you give to a new international student preparing to come to the United States to attend a university regarding adapting to this new life experience? 4. Is there anything else you want to share that I have not asked you in this interview ? |
|---|--|

Appendix F

Interview Observation Reflection Questions

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time seem to be appropriate? How did you feel about the interview ?
2. Were the words, terms, and questions clear or were there places when the interviewee was unclear?
3. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous? For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer in regard to the preceding descriptors? Do you think you had ample opportunities to respond to the questions?
4. Did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?
5. Did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared? For the observers: how did you perceive the interviewer in regard to the preceding descriptors?
6. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
7. Are there parts of the interview that seemed to be awkward and why do you think that was the case?

8. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would it be and how would you change it? Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?
9. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?
10. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview... (I'm pretty new at this)?

Appendix G

Field Test Interviewee Feedback Questions

1. How did you feel about the interview? Were the words clear to understand?
2. Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?
3. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?
4. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?
5. If there was some uncertainty, where in the interview did
6. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?
7. Did I appear comfortable during the interview?

Appendix H

Invitation Letter to Participate

Date:

Dear Potential Study Participant:

My name is Jeanette Ayala. Currently, I am a doctoral student studying Organizational Leadership at Brandman University. The purpose of the study is to create a better understanding of the phenomena of international student's lived experiences while attending a Southern California university regarding the types of support they received to adapt to a new culture experience and barriers to their successful adaptation to a new cultural experience.

I will need six participants to interview for this qualitative research study. The participants must meet the following criteria:

- Students will have applied to study abroad outside of their home country.
- Participants would have been issued a F-1 or J-1 visa by an educational institution.
- The student will be in the United States on a non-immigrant visa.
- The educational institution will offer 4 year degree programs.
- The educational institution will be a university located in a Southern California.

I am requesting for your participation in this important research study. Attached, for your review is Brandman University's Research Participants Bill of Rights and a sample consent form that is given to the participants of the study. The student's responses will be pooled for the study and individual answers will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. I am asking for your assistance in the study by participating in a virtual Zoom or in person interview. The meeting will be coordinated when a time is best for you and will take between 50 to 60 minutes. I want to assure you that should participate in the research study, your answers will be confidential. The data will be under the sole control of the researcher and will remain in a locked cabinet. I assure you that the interview could be stopped at any time you desired. However, the analysis of the study will be shared with the institution. As the dissertation will be published, only pooled results will be documented; no costs will be incurred by either the individual participants or your institution

Should, you want to speak with me regarding the research, I can be reached at my personal email Jeminsurance@gmail.com or my phone number (562) 607-5838. I would be happy to answer any questions or provide more information regarding the study. If you agree to assist me by participating with the study, kindly respond to this email.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Ayala

